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CONTENTS

MIDDLE EAST & SOUTH ASIA REVIEW

28 December Middle East and South Asia Review 1

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Palestinian Affairs

PLO Executive Committee Issues Statement *[INA]* 2
Baghdad Radio Reports 'Arafat News Conference 2
'Arafat Rejects Israeli Peace Initiative *[AFP]* 3
PLO's 'Arafat on Terrorism, 'Uprising' *[Hamburg DER SPIEGEL 26 Dec]* 3
PLO Official Expresses Solidarity with Libya *[KUNA]* 6
Muragha Interviewed on PNC Resolutions *[Voice of the Mountain]* 7
PLO Forms Provisional Government Legal Committee *[INA]* 8
PLO Decides To Turn Offices Into Embassies *[INA]* 8

South Asian Regional Affairs

Spokesman on Foreign Ministers' Meeting *[Islamabad Radio]* 8
Bhutto, Gandhi To Meet *[AFP]* 9

ARAB AFRICA

Algeria

Italy's Andreotti Arrives in Algiers for Talks *[Rome International]* 10
Libya's Jallud Arrives on Official Visit *[Algiers Radio]* 10
Received by Bendjedid *[Algiers TV]* 10
FLN Official Discusses Domestic, Foreign Issues *[London AL-HAWADITH 23 Dec]* 11

Egypt

Mubarak Visit to Israel Linked to PLO Talks *[MENA]* 12
MENA Carries Mubarak AL-ANBA' Interview 12
President Receives Kuwaiti Labor Minister *[KUNA]* 19
Officials Comment on Relations With Syria *[Abu Dhabi AL-ITTIHAD 26 Dec]* 19

Libya

Algerian Minister Visits Pharmaceutical Plant *[Tripoli Radio]* 20
Envoy Says Chemical Plant Open To View *[Budapest MTI]* 20
Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister Arrives *[JANA]* 20
Received by Foreign Secretary *[JANA]* 20
PDRY's Salim al-Bid Contacts Al-Qadhdhafi *[Tripoli TV]* 21

Sudan

'Thousands' Demonstrate Against Price Hikes *[SUNA]* 21
Finance Minister Reacts to Demonstration *[SUNA]* 21
Ruling Party Appeals to Citizens for Calm *[SUNA]* 22
Trade Union Federation Calls for General Strike *[SUNA]* 22
Further Details *[AFP]* 22
Chadian Army Moves Away From Al-Wakhaim *[Omdurman Radio]* 22

Tunisia

Concern Expressed Over 'Threats' to Libya *[Tunis Radio]* 22
Human Rights League Protests Seizure of Weekly *[AFP]* 23
Deputies Ratify Election Law Amendment *[Tunis Radio]* 23

ARABIAN PENINSULA

Kuwait

Defense Ministry Warns of 'Suspicious Object' *[KUNA]* 24

PDRY

Defense Minister Leaves on Visit to Cuba *[ANA]* 24

Qatar

'Concern' Over U.S. Threats to Libya Expressed *[WAKH]* 24

United Arab Emirates

Federal National Council Session Inaugurated *[Abu Dhabi Radio]* 24

IRAQ

Saddam Husayn Confers With PLO's 'Arafat *[INA]* 27
'Arafat Lays Foundation Stone for Embassy *[Baghdad Radio]* 27
Arab Lawyers Union Chairman on Al-Asad Talks *[INA]* 27
AL-THAWRAH Cited on Criticism of Syria *[INA]* 28
Arab Monetary Fund Grants $112 Million Loan *[WAKH]* 28

ISRAEL

Further on Possible Shamir-Mubarak Meeting 29
Shamir: No 'Preconditions' *[Tel Aviv Radio]* 29
Ghali Explains Mubarak's Stand *[YEDI'OT AHARONOT 28 Dec]* 29
Jerusalem Reacts 'With Caution' *[Jerusalem Radio]* 30
Arens Given Message *[THE JERUSALEM POST 27 Dec]* 30
Soviets Ready To Assist in Dialogue With PLO *[HA'ARETZ 27 Dec]* 30
Palestinians Discuss 'Cease-Fire,' Elections *[HA'ARETZ 28 Dec]* 31
Moshe Arens on 'Peril' of Palestinian State *[Jerusalem Radio]* 31
Rabin: 'Patience' Will Cause More Change in PLO *['AL HAMISHMAR 27 Dec]* 31
Poll Shows Majority Favors Talks With PLO *[YEDI'OT AHARONOT 23 Dec]* 31
Shamir Meets With U.S. Senator Larry Pressler *[Jerusalem Radio]* 32
Thatcher Invites Shamir To 'Talk Over Issues' *[THE JERUSALEM POST 28 Dec]* 32
Ties With Kenya Renewed; Nigeria, India Targeted *[Tel Aviv Radio]* 32
Shekel Devalued 5 Percent; Further Steps Possible *[Jerusalem Radio]* 33
Central Bank Governor Proposes Economic Plan *[THE JERUSALEM POST 26 Dec]* 33
Industrial Production Statistics Show Decline *[THE JERUSALEM POST 28 Dec]* 34
Devaluation Marks Return to 'Chaotic Days' *[THE JERUSALEM POST 28 Dec]* 34
Lahd 'Improving;' Doctors Hope for Release 'Soon' *[DAVAR 23 Dec]* 34
12 Lebanese Suspects in Car Bomb Affair Released *[Jerusalem Radio]* 35
Settlers Plan Campaign Against 'Uprising' *[YEDI'OT AHARONOT 27 Dec]* 35
Curfews, Disturbances Reported in Territories 35
Curfew in Tulkarm; 2 Wounded *[Tel Aviv Radio]* 35
Conflicting Counts on Wounded *[Jerusalem Radio]* 35
Curfew on West Bank Camp *[Tel Aviv Radio]* 36
Shamir Orders 'Freeze' on Amos Satellite Project *[HA'ARETZ 23 Dec]* 36

JORDAN

Foreign Minister al-Qasim Receives Iraqi Official *[Amman Radio]* 37
Al-Rifa'i Confers With PLO Officials *[Amman Radio]* 37
Fatah Dissident 'Atallah's Offices Closed *[WAKH]* 37
Ground Teams, Air Force Eliminate Locust Swarms *[Amman JORDAN TIMES 25 Dec]* 37

LEBANON

Further on Alleged Release of French Hostages 38
Family 'Used' for Media Campaign *[VOL]* 38
Children Still at 'Secret Base' *[AFP]* 38
Further From Spokesman *[RFL]* 38
Abu Nidal Meets French Children *[VOM]* 38
Al-Huss, Libyan Official Exchange Cables *[Beirut Radio]* 39
Reagan's 'Direct Threats' to Libya Criticized *[AL-SAFIR 23 Dec]* 39
Junblatt Makes Changes in PSP Appointments *[VOM]* 39
Communist Party Politburo Member on Events *[Sofia RABOTNICHESKO DELO 25 Dec]* 39
Fadlallah: Initiatives Represent Foreign Ideas *[Voice of the Oppressed]* 40
Hizballah Said Seeking To Oust Amal From Beirut *[RFL]* 41
Palestinian Group Clashes With Israeli Patrol *[VOL]* 41
Amal Resistance Group Shells Position 26 Dec *[Beirut Radio]* 41
Amal-Hizballah Fighting Erupts in Southern Suburb *[VOL]* 41
Israeli Aircraft Stage Mock Raids Over Sidon *[Beirut Radio]* 41
Group Claims Attack on Syrian Target in Beirut *[RFL]* 41
Forces Security Service Releases 15 Detainees *[RFL]* 41

SYRIA

NPF Reviews Foreign, Domestic Policies *[Damascus Radio]* 42
'Smoldering Tension' With USSR Reported *[Abu Dhabi AL-ITTIHAD 26 Dec]* 42

SOUTH ASIA

Afghanistan

1 Killed, 10 Wounded in Rocket Attack on Kabul *[BAKHTAR]* 43
AFP Reports Situation 43
Kabol Province Deputies Discuss Reconciliation *[BAKHTAR]* 43
Sharq Chairs Council of Ministers Meeting 27 Dec *[BAKHTAR]* 44
Najibullah Meets With Paktia Chieftains *[BAKHTAR]* 44
Military Action Against Rebels in Various Areas 44
50 'Extremists' Killed *[BAKHTAR]* 44
'Arab Advisers,' Others 'Crushed *[Kabul Radio]* 44
Weapons Depot Discovered *[Kabul Radio]* 45
'Extremist' Activity Detailed *[Kabul Radio]* 45
Police Confiscate 180 kg Heroin in Kabul *[Kabul Radio]* 45
Mujahidin Activity in East, West Reported 45
Nangarhar Commander Killed *[Islamabad International]* 45
Operations in Farah, Herat *[Islamabad Radio]* 46
Pakistani 'Violations' Protested to UN Mission 46
Note No 163 *[Kabul Radio]* 46
Note No 164 *[BAKHTAR]* 46
Canalization Protocol Signed With USSR *[BAKHTAR]* 46
Keshtmand, Delegation Depart for Cuba *[Kabul Radio]* 46

India

Gandhi To Sign Nuclear Pact With Pakistan *[BBC]* 47
Commentary on Upcoming Gandhi-Bhutto Meeting *[Delhi International]* 47
Government Urged To Set Up Chinese Border Group *[Delhi Radio]* 48

Violence Continues in Andhra Pradesh Towns *[Delhi Radio]* 48
Curfews on 24 Towns; 30 Dead *[Delhi Radio]* 49
'Terrorist' Incidents Reported in Punjab 49
6 Bus Passengers Kidnapped *[Delhi Radio]* 49
6 Killed in Separate Incidents *[Delhi Radio]* 49
4 'Terrorists' Killed *[Delhi Radio]* 49
Report Claims Improved Internal Security in 1988 *[Delhi Radio]* 50
Satellite Images To Be Purchased From Europe *[Delhi Radio]* 50
Communication Satellite To Be Launched in Spring *[Delhi Radio]* 50
U.S. Ambassador Presents Credentials 27 Dec *[Delhi Radio]* 50

Iran

U.S. 'Propaganda War' Against Libya Denounced *[Tehran Radio]* 50
New Soviet Moves in Afghanistan Viewed *[Tehran Radio]* 51
USSR's Vorontsov To Visit for Afghan Talks *[IRNA]* 52
Rabbani: Afghan Mujahidin Groups To Meet 15 Feb *[IRNA]* 52
Foreign Ministry Statement on Afghan Anniversary *[Tehran Radio]* 53
Resident Afghans Mark Occupation Anniversary *[IRNA]* 53
Khomeyni Receives Lebanon's Shams al-Din *[Radio Free Lebanon]* 53
Talks With Khamene'i *[Tehran TV]* 54
Syrian Foreign Minister Arrives for Consultations 54
Welcomed by Velayati *[IRNA]* 54
Makes Statement *[Damascus TV]* 54
Exchanges Views With Velayati *[IRNA]* 54
Further on Meeting *[Damascus Radio]* 55
Ties Discussed With Khamene'i *[IRNA]* 55
Cooperation, Trade Relations Discussed With Oman 55
Musavi on 'Friendly Ties' *[IRNA]* 55
Trade Relations To Expand *[IRNA]* 55
Training Agreement Reached *[IRNA]* 55
Visit 'Successful' *[IRNA]* 56
Letter of Understanding Signed *[IRNA]* 56
Reportage on Visit by DPRK Foreign Minister 56
Delegation Arrives 26 Dec *[IRNA]* 56
Received by Rafsanjani *[IRNA]* 57
Economic Cooperation Discussed *[IRNA]* 57
Mining Minister Returns from Visit to DPRK *[IRNA]* 57
Major Operations Made Against Drug Trafficking *[IRNA]* 58
Iraqi Cease-Fire Violations Detailed *[IRNA]* 58
Border Crossing With Turkey Reopened *[IRNA]* 59

Pakistan

Saudi Diplomat Wounded in Karachi Shooting *[Islamabad Radio]* 59
Yaqub Khan on Successes of SAARC Activities *[Islamabad Radio]* 59
Wasim Sajjad Elected New Senate Chairman *[Islamabad Radio]* 59
Two More Ministers Inducted Into Federal Cabinet *[Islamabad Radio]* 59

Sri Lanka

Opposition Readies for First Election in 11 Years *[AFP]* 60
Pressure on LTTE To Shun Violence Continues *[Delhi Radio]* 60

28 December Middle East and South Asia Review

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Israel

Egyptian President Husni Mubarak would only be willing to visit Israel if Israel agrees to begin a dialogue with the PLO, Butrus Ghali, Egyptian minister of state for foreign affairs, told YEDI'OT AHARONOT.

Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir said the visit should be held without preconditions, IDF radio reported.

In another development, the Soviet ambassador to Egypt told HA'ARETZ the Soviet Union is ready to help establish a dialogue between Israel and the PLO.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Moshe Arens sent a message to Jordan's King Husayn, telling him Israel considers him an "important partner in the peace process," Jerusalem radio disclosed.

Palestinian Affairs

PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir 'Arafat told a news conference the next Palestinian move will focus on "stepping up the popular uprising" and he condemned the program of Israel's coalition government as a "program of war," Baghdad radio reported.

'Arafat predicted that Israeli attacks against Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon will take place before the end of President Reagan's term of office, according to a WAKH account of the news conference.

'Arafat rejected Shamir's peace proposal, which "sidesteps the PLO," asserting that attempts to revive the Camp David accords are "destined for failure," AFP noted.

'Arafat called for the continuation of the U.S.-PLO dialogue, as "nothing can get done in the region without the United States."

In continued resistance to 'Arafat's efforts for peace, Sa'id Musa Muragha, secretary general of the Fatah Uprising Provisional Command, reiterated rejection of the PNC resolutions passed in Algiers and denounced 'Arafat's policies, according to the clandestine Voice of the Mountain radio.

He said the PLO is "not institutions and departments, it is the charter," and by abandoning the charter, 'Arafat has renounced his legitimacy.

Inter-Arab Affairs

A meeting in Amman is planned between Egyptian President Mubarak, Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad, and Iraqi President Saddam Husayn, Radio Monte Carlo reported.

A "prominent" Fatah official will visit Damascus "within the next 2 weeks...to restore dialogue" between Syria and the Fatah movement, the UAE paper AL-ITTIHAD disclosed.

Lebanon

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni received in Tehran Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din, deputy chairman of the Higher Islamic Shi'ite Council, to discuss the conflict between Hizballah and the Amal Movement, the clandestine Radio Free Lebanon reported.

Shams al-Din described the talks as "useful."

Meanwhile, clashes took place 27 December in a southern suburb of Beirut between Amal and Hizballah gunmen, Voice of Lebanon radio reported.

Afghanistan

Mujahidin groups based in Pakistan and Iran have announced that there is "no conflict" between them and have set a meeting to "decide on the future government in Afghanistan" for 15 February, IRNA reported.

Meanwhile, resistance forces fired six rockets on Kabul, killing one person and wounding five others, BAKHTAR reported.

The mujahidin were marking the 9th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, AFP noted.

Sudan

"Thousands" of people gathered in Khartoum and other Sudanese cities to protest government price hikes, while 75 trade unions signed work stoppage declarations, SUNA reported.

The finance minister called on the people to abandon their strikes, as the price rises are the only solution to the country's economic difficulties.

Palestinian Affairs

PLO Executive Committee Issues Statement

JN2712101088 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0905 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Baghdad, 27 Dec (INA)—The PLO Executive Committee has voiced its rejection of the new Israeli maneuver of conducting elections in the occupied territories on autonomy rule.

The PLO Executive Committee said this new Israeli plot is a political plan that is aimed against the Palestinian plan and that this plot is aimed at circumventing international resolutions and diverting attention from the establishment of a Palestinian state. It called on world public opinion to be cautious toward the Israeli deception. It also called for withdrawal from the occupied territories.

This came in a statement issued by the PLO Executive Committee in Baghdad today following 3 days of meetings. It stressed its pride in the great political successes achieved by the PLO on the international level. It said that moving the UN General Assembly session from New York to Geneva to hear the voice of Palestinian freedom is of great significance and that it has expressed the firmness of world recognition of the Palestinian people's right to establish their independent state on their national soil.

It pointed out that the world response to the Palestinian national rights has opened wide horizons to the heroic uprising, which is determined to continue and escalate until the occupation of the occupied territories is terminated to enable the Palestinian people to establish their national independent state.

The PLO Executive Committee also stressed that Yasir 'Arafat's address to the UN General Assembly in Geneva and his press statement there are in full harmony with the PNC resolutions.

In this regard, the committee denounced what it described as anomalous voices in the region. It said these voices were unable to achieve anything as a result of the isolation imposed on them by the national Palestinian gains.

The PLO Executive Committee called for further closing of and safeguarding national ranks. It said it has full confidence in the soundness of the political program that has besieged the enemies, isolated them in the international arena, and ended the stage of U.S. disregard of the PLO and the Palestinian people's rights.

It stressed that this political program gains daily national, pan-Arab, and international support and provides elements of comprehensive world pressure on the Israeli challenge that is now isolated in the extreme.

The Executive Committee expressed its high appreciation to the 90 countries that recognized the Palestinian state, saying these countries were headed by the fraternal Arab states, friendly states such as the USSR and all the socialist bloc states, China, and the nonaligned, Islamic, and African states.

It also expressed its satisfaction with the improvement in the stands of the West European states and called on these states to further improve their stands toward the Palestinian people.

The Committee referred to his holiness the pope's meeting with 'Arafat and expressed its profound sentiment toward and appreciation for the spiritual and political meaning of this meeting and his holiness' support for the Palestinian people's rights to an independent state. The Committee considered this stand a support from the Vatican for the people of the land of the prophets.

The Executive Committee also reviewed the formation of the new Israeli government and the manifestations of Israel's strangling isolation. It said the new war government is dangerous because it denies the Palestinian people's rights and resists international unanimity.

The Committee warned of Israel's attempt to export its internal crisis by using its military and terrorist arm against the Palestinian camps in Lebanon.

The Executive Committee called on the Arab states to remain vigilant, alert, and cautious to Israel's war programs. It said raising Arab solidarity to a higher level calls for an immediate Arab summit conference.

Concluding its statement, the Executive Committee hailed Iraq's support for the Palestinian people. It also hailed Iraq's steadfastness under President Saddam Husayn's leadership as well as its glorious victory in the brave defense of the eastern gateway of the Arab homeland.

The Committee said this victory created for the Palestinian people and their uprising a new Arab and international situation which enabled them to move in a better political atmosphere.

Baghdad Radio Reports 'Arafat News Conference

JN2712182288 Baghdad Domestic Service in Arabic 1700 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir 'Arafat has said that in its meetings that concluded in Baghdad last night, the committee decided to continue moves aimed at placing the occupied Palestinian territories under the supervision of the United Nations and protecting the Palestinian people from the massacres perpetrated against them.

At a news conference in Baghdad today, 'Arafat added that the Executive Committee studied in detail information on the scenario of the war being prepared by the

Zionist entity against Lebanon, targeting the Palestinian camps in Sidon and Tyre. The scenario, he said, was prepared in coordination between Israel and some agent suspicious Arab forces in the region.

He stressed that the next Palestinian moves will focus on stepping up the popular uprising, consolidating the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in southern Lebanon, and continuing diplomatic moves to convene an international conference on peace in the region.

'Arafat strongly condemned the program of the Zionist entity's coalition government, describing it as a program of war. He pointed out, for that matter, terrorist enemy Prime Minister Shamir's orders to the Zionist army not to follow ethical and human rules toward the Palestinian uprising and not to hesitate in killing children, women, and old men.

'Arafat talked about efforts to convene an Arab summit and said the PLO is seeking the convening of this summit as soon as posible to discuss the current issues of the Arab nation and the latest developments on the Palestinian scene.

The news conference was attended by correspondents of Arab and foreign news agencies, press, and media in Baghdad.

'Arafat Rejects Israeli Peace Initiative

NC2712180488 Paris AFP in English 1749 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Baghdad, Dec 27 (AFP)—PLO Chairman Yasir 'Arafat rejected here Tuesday a peace proposal by Israel Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir that reportedly sidesteps the PLO and refuses the idea of an independent Palestinian state.

"Mr Shamir wants to concede administrative autonomy to us and thus recover international support, but these maneuvers are useless now," Mr 'Arafat told a press conference. "No one is willing to listen, not in the Middle East, not on the international scene."

Mr Shamir announced Sunday he was willing to meet Egyptian President Husni Mubarak and would unveil a "new" Middle East peace plan.

Authoritative sources in Jerusalem said the plan calls for talks between Israel and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation under the auspices of the United States and the Soviet Union—sidestepping an international conference involving the other U.N. Security Council members.

Mr Shamir's plan, according to one of his spokesmen, is based on the 1978 Camp David accords, which call for Palestinians in the occupied territories to run their own local administrations—stopping well short of independence demanded by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

"Mr Shamir's attempts to revive the Camp David accords are destined for failure," Mr 'Arafat said.

In a related development, Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Butrus Ghali declared Tuesday in Cairo that President Mubarak was willing to visit Israel if Israel agreed to "open a dialogue with the PLO."

Mr Mubarak first announced Sunday that he would go to Israel if the trip would "resolve the Palestinian problem."

During his press conference here, Mr 'Arafat said Mr Mubarak had not consulted him before announcing the initiative.

"I don't have any detains on that proposal, but I think the Egyptian president is ready to make contact with all the parties, and not only Israel, to advance the peace process," Mr 'Arafat said.

The PLO chairman also took to task Israel's new coalition government, calling it "hostile to peace ' because "it says no the PLO, no to an international conference and no to a Palestinian state."

He said Israeli Labour Party leader Shim'on Peres—a longtime advocate of an international conference—had "revealed his true face" by joining the new government, which refuses the conference idea.

Mr 'Arafat also called for the continuation of the fledgling U.S.-PLO dialogue, saying, "Nothing can get done in the region without the United States."

The first contact between U.S. Ambassador to Tunis Robert Pelletreau and a PLO delegation on December 17 was limited to an exchange of views, he said. The PLO is preparing a working paper for the next meeting, the date of which has not been fixed.

PLO's 'Arafat on Terrorism, 'Uprising'

AU2712165788 Hamburg DER SPIEGEL in German 26 Dec pp 112-114

[Interview with PLO Chairman Yasir 'Arafat by Adel S. Elias and Romain Leick in Vienna, date not given: "'No Talks Between Master and Servant'; PLO leader 'Arafat on Palestine After the PLO's Recognition by the United States"]

[Text] DER SPIEGEL: Mr 'Arafat, after a dramatic diplomatic struggle, you fulfilled the U.S. conditions for the start of direct talks between the United States and the PLO. Only 1 day before that you had announced that you would not do a striptease under any circumstances.

'Arafat: This assumption is absurd. It is not that I have changed, it is the Americans who have moved. I approved of UN Resolution 242 as early as 5 years ago.

Even at that time I called for an international peace conference. I have maintained the same attitude since 1983. Everyone who has eyes has been able to see it.

DER SPIEGEL: Why did the Americans pretend to be blind for such a long time?

'Arafat: The bomb has exploded in Geneva with a loud bang because the United States has realized the world will no longer accept its one-sided pro-Israeli attitude. Washington went too far when it refused to grant me an entry visa...

DER SPIEGEL: ...on the grounds that you are an accomplice of terrorism in the Middle East.

'Arafat: Yet I am not wanted by Interpol. I do not have women and children shot at like rabbits as the Israeli Government does. I am not responsible for 3,400 miscarriages caused by the Israeli army's tear gas in the occupied territories.

DER SPIEGEL: What made the United States change its mind?

'Arafat: The decision of 154 UN member states to transfer the General Assembly from New York to Geneva. These states have demanded that the Palestinians must be heard and they forced the Americans to listen to us.

DER SPIEGEL: Did George Shultz's refusal to grant you a U.S. visa not cause you, for your part, to approach the Americans? Would you have made the same statements in New York as in Geneva?

'Arafat: Certainly. For this was not a personal speech of mine. The text had been drafted and formulated by the PLO Executive Committee. I presented the PLO's position in Geneva. When I applied to the Americans for the entry visa via the UN Secretariat on 4 November, Washington had already decided to refuse the visa to me, without waiting to see what position I would take in New York.

DER SPIEGEL: Did you feel personally humiliated by the prohibition to the enter the country?

'Arafat: No, I do not take this personally. I am struggling for an honorable cause. As a reaction to the Americans' presumption, the United Nations, for the first time in its history, decided to transfer the General Assembly to Geneva. I do not consider this decision as a victory over the Americans, but as the triumph of law and justice.

DER SPIEGEL: You have now "renounced" in unambiguous words all acts of terrorism. Formerly, you mostly said only that you would "condemn" terrorism. What is the difference for you?

'Arafat: I condemn terrorism in all its forms—the terrorism of individuals, of groups, and of states. You know that we decided in the PLO to exclude from our ranks every person or group that ignores this prohibition.

DER SPIEGEL: Does the renunciation of terrorism also include the renunciation of violence in the occupied territories and in the core of the Jewish state?

'Arafat: You have to distinguish between terrorism as a crime and the just national struggle against occupation, which is completely legitimate according to the UN resolutions.

We are entitled to resist against the Israelis by all means. The United Nations has made it clear in several resolutions that the Israeli State is a state of occupation. It has called upon the Israelis to withdraw their troops from the occupied territories. Despite this, I gave the personal order not to use, for any reason, firearms in the intifadah. So far, we have adhered to it.

DER SPIEGEL: For the Israelis, stones and gasoline bombs are also terrorist weapons.

'Arafat: Does Israel really believe the world thinks it puts intifadah and terrorism on the same level? Does Israel seriously expect suppressed and occupied peoples to behave like slaves without any resistance?

DER SPIEGEL: If the Palestinians' struggle is to be considered as just by the world, you would have to restrict your actions to military targets.

'Arafat: We do this.

DER SPIEGEL: You have not always done so. Busses with civilians and even children were attacked.

'Arafat: How do you know that it was us? Our attitude is unambiguous: We are against attacks on civilian targets and we will always be against them. However, do not forget how many of our women and children have been killed by Israeli bullets. I advocate that not another single drop of blood be shed—neither that of an Israeli nor of an Arab.

DER SPIEGEL: That is what you say!

'Arafat: I say so because I am myself a victim of terrorism. Since the beginning of the intifadah we have had 547 martyrs. In addition, 19,000 people were injured, 4,700 of whom were beaten up or shot at in such a way that they have been crippled.

In addition, there are 28,000 prisoners, compared to 1.5 million inhabitants—is this not terrorism? The murder of my deputy Abu Jihad [Khalil al-Wazir], the air raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunis—is all this not terrorism?

The Israelis are depriving us of our livelihood; they are no longer letting money into the occupied territories; they closed the universities. They want to starve us to death and make us illiterate. This surpasses even the Nuremberg racial laws of the Nazis. They want to eradicate the Palestinian people.

DER SPIEGEL: An absurd comparison. Now you are talking like somebody who wants to justify counterterrorism. Once again: Who is bound by your renunciation of terrorism?

'Arafat: I can only talk for the groups that are represented in the PLO. And I vouch for them.

DER SPIEGEL: Are you not afraid Arab extremists will thwart your peace offensive by a wave of terrorist attacks?

'Arafat: No. However, I expect several massacres and the murders of many of our leading personalities by the Israeli secret service Mossad. Moreover, I expect the Israelis to further increase their terror in the occupied territories and to act far more brutally than before.

Only a few days ago, an 11-year old child died in Nabulus. Shamir gave the order to the army not to respect any moral standards in their actions. This is a clear order to kill.

DER SPIEGEL: What do you exactly understand by Israel's right of existence? Do you concede the Israelis the moral and historical right to have their home in Palestine or do you only put up with the existence of this state for the time being?

'Arafat: The recognition of the State of Israel by me is based on UN Resolution 181, the division plan of 1947. Considered from the historical point of view, this resolution did an injustice to us. But I accept it. A Jewish and a Palestinian state are to be established on Palestinian territory.

But now I ask you: Why do the United States and many West European states, among them the FRG, only recognize half of this resolution of 1947—the one that advocates the founding of the State of Israel? These countries refer to Resolution 181 and say Israel's right to exist is based on it.

However, the resolution mentions two states. Whoever recognizes the state of Israel by virtue of this resolution, cannot deny the Palestinian state's right to exist.

DER SPIEGEL: In Article 15 of the PLO Charter the claim "to eliminate Zionism in Palestine," that is, according to Article 9, by armed struggle, is still in effect. What is really valid?

'Arafat: If you want to talk about the PLO Charter, let me also talk about old stories of Zionism. Do you know that the blue stripes on the Israeli flag symbolize nothing but the two rivers of Euphrates and Nile? In between there is the Star of David, this is how far Israel is planned to be extended.

The hymn of Shamir's party, the Herut, says that the East and the West Bank is its home. If you want to return to old slogans—all right, I am ready for it. Then we want to return to Golda Meir, who said there are no Palestinian people and every Palestinian child that is born caused her sleepless nights.

DER SPIEGEL: If some things, as you say, are no longer valid for the PLO, why do you not change them?

'Arafat: This question will be no longer topical when Israel and we negotiate as two states with equal rights. We have plenty of claims against Israel, and the Israelis will have plenty of claims against us. Let us negotiate, without preconditions and taboos, but as partners with equal rights. There will be no talks between master and servant.

DER SPIEGEL: Will you insist on the Palestinians' right to return to their old homeland and on compensation for the expulsion?

'Arafat: I will safeguard all our political rights. I will make claims and the Israelis will make claims, too.

DER SPIEGEL: But you are ready for compromises?

'Arafat: Of course. Therefore, we also say a peace conference is to be held under UN aegis and with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

DER SPIEGEL: How soon will a peace conference be held in your opinion?

'Arafat: We are pressing for it to be held as soon as possible. We have demanded the establishment of a committee to prepare the conference. French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas presented a petition to this effect to the United Nations.

DER SPIEGEL: If an independent Palestinian state is created at the end of this peace process—what will it have as its borders?

'Arafat: We expect a peace conference to strictly implement all UN resolutions. In them you find everything regarding the borders of our state.

DER SPIEGEL: In Resolution 181, the borders are really described in great detail. According to it, Israel would have to cede not only the occupied territories, but also major parts of the country which it has possessed for 40 years. Do you consider this realistic?

'Arafat: We can negotiate on this at the peace conference. Many compromises are conceivable. However, in any event we will demand the establishment of a corridor between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

It is not acceptable for us to establish a state that consists of two separate parts. But let us first start the negotiations, then everybody may present his claims.

DER SPIEGEL: You claim Jerusalem as the capital of your state. The Israelis do not want to renounce Jerusalem as the capital of their state. How can an agreement be reached?

'Arafat: I again refer to the respective UN resolutions which have also been recognized by the United States. All territories that were conquered by force have to be returned, it is stated.

The eastern part of Jerusalem was conquered by force. Not even the United States has recognized the annexation of the Arab part of Jerusalem. Thus, you will hardly expect me to do so?

DER SPIEGEL: That is to say, Jerusalem would have to be divided again?

'Arafat: If we recognize the UN resolutions, then the other side will also have to recognize them. We claim our Arab Jerusalem, not more and not less.

DER SPIEGEL: Could this be solved by making Jerusalem international territory, according to the partition plan of 1947? 'Arafat: All this will have to be discussed at a peace conference.

DER SPIEGEL: The dispute over Jerusalem could be the most crucial issue. Would you be willing to accept a Palestinian state without Jerusalem for the time being, with a provisional capital until this problem is solved?

'Arafat: No, never. I do not want a provisional capital, I want Jerusalem as a capital. The FRG model with Bonn as the provisional capital is no model for us.

DER SPIEGEL: Israel considers an independent Palestinian state to be a deadly danger. Would you agree to a demilitarization of your state, to dispel the fears of the Jews?

'Arafat: If the Israelis do without their Armed Forces, I will also do without mine. But if the Israelis keep their Armed Forces, I will also keep mine. We want to be a state with unrestricted sovereignty.

Why do you only ask things from me and not from the Israelis? The Israelis are entitled to be afraid of us, but I am not allowed to be afraid of them. Who guarantees our people that the massacres of Sabra and Shatila will not be repeated?

DER SPIEGEL: There are about 70,000 Jewish settlers in the occupied territories. What is to happen with them in a Palestinian state? Will they be allowed to stay or do they have to leave?

'Arafat: The intifadah has considerably reduced the number of settlers. Maybe there are still about 16,000 of them. I am asking myself how many will be left if the intifadah continues for some more time.

DER SPIEGEL: A state that comprises only the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would be a small and feeble structure. Do you not need a confederation with Jordan to be able to survive?

'Arafat: There are many states in the world that are smaller than Palestine. First we want an independent state and then the people should decide whether they want a confederation with Jordan or not. It is not a question of the geographical size but of self-determination. Singapore is also very small.

DER SPIEGEL: Many Israelis would like to see you dead...

'Arafat: Oh yes. The government has already instructed its secret service to eliminate me. I know that. Its agents are following me wherever I go. They call this operation "The Best Hit."

DER SPIEGEL: Are you not afraid Arab hotheads are also trying to kill you because you have become a traitor in their eyes through the peace offensive?

'Arafat: Not a single Arab is after my life. I disagree with them over many things, but nobody wants to kill me because of that.

DER SPIEGEL: Do you think you will see the day of the founding of the Palestinian state?

'Arafat: Yes and it will happen very soon. It is already a quarter to twelve.

DER SPIEGEL: Mr 'Arafat, we thank you for the interview.

PLO Official Expresses Solidarity with Libya

LD2612143188 Kuwait KUNA in English 1316 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Kuwait, Dec 26 KUNA—A ranking Palestinian official Monday expressed solidarity with Libya in face of the U.S. threats against that Arab country for allegedly having a plant that produces chemical weapons.

Member of Fatah Central Committee Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) said in a press conference here that "we hope that the U.S. would not commit such a foolish mistake by attacking Libya because any aggression on Libya would be an aggression on the Arab nation."

He stressed that if the U.S. attacks Libya "we will consider that an aggression on the PLO and we will fight with the Libyan people" and called for a unified Arab stance in face of these threats.

Abu Iyad welcomed the recent agreement between Fatah and the Lebanese Amal movement in Lebanon on ending the siege imposed by Amal on Palestinian refugee camps.

He explained that this agreement has paved the way for the return of 20,000 Palestinian to Rashidiyah and Burj al-Barajinah refugee camps.

He called for the convening of an Arab summit conference to discuss the Lebanese crisis and to pave the way for electing a new Lebanese president.

The Palestinian official warned that Israel intends to commit collective massacres in the occupied territories and task forces for such operations have been formed.

He also warned that Israel is planning to carry out assassination attempts against Palestinian leaders and will also try to commit terrorist attacks and blame them on the Palestinians.

On the recent recognition of the Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 by the PLO, Abu Iyad stressed that the Palestinian organization had not made any concessions but it had presented a political program for movement on the next stage.

In an answer to a question from KUNA, Abu Iyad said the PLO's [word indistinct] is not to use arms other than stones in the uprising so as not to give the enemy the chance to use its weapons against the Palestinians.

Commenting on the recently-started U.S.-PLO dialogue, Abu Iyad hoped that it will be a step for reaching to the American public opinion.

Abu Iyad hailed the (?stand of) his highness the amir and his support to the popular uprising and for devoting all capabilities to show the sufferings of the Palestinian people.

Muragha Interviewed on PNC Resolutions

NC2712151488 (Clandestine) Voice of the Mountain in Arabic to Lebanon 1230 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Colonel Abu Musa [Sa'id Musa Muragha], secretary general of the Fatah Uprising-Provisional Command, has underlined that the nationalist Palestinian forces reject the resolutions passed by the PNC in Algiers. Abu Musa denounced 'Arafat's policies and hailed the continuation and escalation of the uprising.

In an interview with our radio, Abu Musa said: As nationalist Palestinian forces, we are totally biased toward the Lebanese nationalists. We believe that any victory for the Lebanese nationalist forces which brings them closer to their target of establishing an Arab nationalist Lebanon will bring us closer to Palestine. We are also convinced that any victory for the other party or any cracks in the Lebanese nationalist stand will make Palestine more distant.

Therefore, we are biased in favor of the Lebanese nationalists and hope that their forces will achieve stronger unity. We hope to serve under the Lebanese nationalist forces and let them manage the conflict in Lebanon against the Zionized forces which are currently represented by the Phalangists and the forces of Ja'ja' and 'Awn. We place ourselves at the disposal of the Lebanese nationalists, who in turn support us in our decision to continue to fight the Zionist entity.

In reply to a question, Abu Musa said: The resolutions passed by the PNC in Algiers are not binding on us. These resolutions do not represent the conscience or the goals of the Palestinian people, the Lebanese people, or the Arab people in general. The Lebanese and the Arabs have supported the Palestinian cause and died for it. They fought for this essential cause because the invading and occupying Zionist enemy is a threat to the entire Arab nation.

Therefore, we believe that the PNC resolutions are not binding on the Palestinian people and fighters or on the Lebanese and Arab forces in general.

Colonel Abu Musa said: It is necessary for the Palestinian forces which reject the PNC resolutions to unite. These forces should find a framework within which they can work together and establish a point of reference for the determination of our people to achieve liberation.

Abu Musa added: We are not against independence. However, independence is something we have to win with our hands, with the hands of the Palestinian and Arab revolutionaries. The occupation will not end through resolutions, but through the resolve of the revolutionaires and the strugglers. This is the lesson which our leaders in the struggles have taught us. This is the lesson taught by 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, by our teacher and leader Kamal Junblatt, by Ma'ruf Sa'd, and by other frontline strugglers. Some people say that what is happening has to do with a settlement. We say that what is happening is a liquidation, not a settlement. This is because the enemy does not accept and has nothing in its Zionist programs that allows for the existence of a Palestinian homeland, a Palestinian people, or the freedom of any Arab in this region.

Asked whether he had plans to set up a surrogate front for the PLO [jabhah radifah li munazzamat al-tahrir], Col Abu Musa said:

No. This will not be a surrogate front. The fact is that the other side [the PLO] has abandoned its goals and any coming formation will be the PLO itself. The PLO, as we

understand it, is not institutions and departments, it is the charter, and anyone who gives up the charter is automatically renouncing his own legitimacy.

Those who, in the recent Algiers meeting, adopted Resolution 181 and Resolutions 242 and 338, knowing that the two latter resolutions deny the existence of our people and our cause, have renounced their legitimacy.

By the same token, those who adopt the PLO Charter and the previous PNC resolutions will become the official PLO and the true representative of the Palestinian people.

Abu Musa stated: At the Algiers meeting, 'Arafat turned his back on three-quarters of our people who were displaced in 1948. All the Palestinians living within [the occupied territories] reject the Algiers resolutions. This is a fact despite the false announcements made on behalf of the revolution and the uprising within [the occupied territories].

Our information is that all those living within are for the continuation of the revolution and against the recognition of Israel. Our people within want to return to Lod, to Ramla, to Jaffa, Haifa, to the Palestine for which we have fought and continue to fight, which our revolution has set out to liberate.

Col Abu Musa said: A year after the uprising-revolution started, we say that our decision is to continue the struggle and to refuse to recognize the Zionist enemy. The revolution has proved itself capable of creating new facts and of managing the conflict with success.

I say we will stand by our people and their wishes and will not betray the blood of our martyrs. We and the revolution will go on until liberation and victory are ours.

PLO Forms Provisional Government Legal Committee

JN2612140088 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1344 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Baghdad, 26 Dec (INA)—The PLO Executive Committee has approved the formation of a legal committee to work out the formula of a provisional government and its bylaws. At the end of 3-day meetings held in Baghdad, the Executive Committee also decided to meet again within the next 10 days to discuss and endorse the legal committee's report.

PLO Decides To Turn Offices Into Embassies

JN2612114088 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1043 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Baghdad, 26 Dec (INA)—An official Palestinian source has told INA that the number of countries recognizing the independent Palestinian state has risen to 90 today.

The source announced that Burundi today communicated its official recognition of the State of Palestine.

The Palestinian official source said that during its meetings in Baghdad which began 2 days ago, the PLO decided to turn its offices in countries which have recognized the State of Palestine into embassies.

The PLO Executive Committee is discussing a number of issues, including the political developments pertaining to the Palestine question and the Palestinian uprising. The committee will also adopt a number of constitutional and administrative resolutions concerning the main structures of the independent State of Palestine.

PLO sources had earlier confirmed to INA that important resolutions will be issued at the conclusion of the committee meetings.

South Asian Regional Affairs

Spokesman on Foreign Ministers' Meeting

BK2812054688 Islamabad Domestic Service in Urdu 0200 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] The first session of the SAARC Foreign Ministers Council in Islamabad approved the report submitted by the Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries. The council set up a committee to prepare the draft of the declaration, which will be called the Islamabad Declaration, and presented at the SAARC summit for approval.

The council has set up another committee to draft a joint press release which will be issued at the end of the summit conference.

At yesterday's meeting, the Council of Ministers also discussed the 10-point agenda and approved most of the issues. Pakistani Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan was elected the chairman for the next year.

Later, an official spokesman told newsmen that the foreign ministers agreed to take concrete steps to assist in the resolution of regional issues. They also expressed the political will to promote the process of regional cooperation and joint action on a wider scale which will directly affect the lives of the people in the region.

The spokesman said that the foreign ministers held informal meetings prior to the plenary session of the council and exchanged views on matters of mutual interest. The foreign ministers read out their statements at the plenary session, reflecting the individual views of member countries on various issues. He said it was decided to hold the next meeting of foreign ministers during the summer in Pakistan.

Answering a question, the spokesman said that the foreign ministers exchanged views on an Indian proposal relating to trade between the regional countries, but no formal decision was taken on the issue.

The spokesman said that Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Prime Minister Ms Benazir Bhutto will have considerable opportunity for exchanging views on bilateral issues. The two premiers are expected to have two or three meetings.

Maldivian Foreign Minister Fathullah Jameel addressing the session stressed the need for enhanced economic cooperation among SAARC countries. He said joint industrial ventures can be started and regional trade can be promoted to the benefit of people in the region.

Bhutto, Gandhi To Meet

BK2812123688 Hong Kong AFP in English 1223 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Islamabad, Dec 28 (AFP)—Sri Lanka is to host the next summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, SAARC sources said here Wednesday.

Foreign ministers of SAARC countries, meeting here ahead of the fourth annual summit, agreed unanimously on Sri Lanka as a venue for the meeting, which would probably be held next November or December, the sources said.

Sri Lanka had been set to host the summit this year but withdrew in August citing "continuing unrest and security considerations" in the ethnically-troubled island state.

Heads of state or government from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were to arrive Thursday for three days of talks on regional issues.

The summit meetings were widely expected to be overshadowed by bilateral talks between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his Pakistani counterpart Benazir Bhutto.

As many as three sessions were planned, the final one after the summit's conclusion on Saturday, when Mr. Gandhi has agreed to extend his stay by a few hours.

The tentative program for Friday called for two hours of "substantive talks" between Ms. Bhutto and Mr. Gandhi, following on the heels of half-hour bilateral meetings with the other visiting leaders.

Also attending the summit will be President Hussain Mohammad Ershad of Bangladesh, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom of Maldives, King Birendra of Nepal and outgoing President Junius Jayewardene of Sri Lanka.

Algeria

Italy's Andreotti Arrives in Algiers for Talks

LD2712202888 Rome International Service in Italian 1830 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Excerpts] Italian Foreign Minister Andreotti has arrived in Algiers on an official visit that will last several days. Our correspondent reports:

The situation in the Mediterranean, economic cooperation, and developments in the Middle East crisis, are the focus of the first meeting which Andreotti has been having with the Algerian Foreign Minister Boualem Bessaieh.

Andreotti, who arrived in Algeria this afternoon will sign an important 3-year agreement on technical assistance, the funding of projects on agro-industrial development, and aid for a series of programs to be decided between Italy and Algeria.

Considering both aid and credit lines overall, the Italian Government will make a sum of $300 million available to the Algerian Government. This will constitute a sizeable step forward in bilateral relations at a particularly difficult juncture for Algeria. [passage omitted]

Italian Foreign Minister Andreotti's political talks will continue tomorrow with a meeting with Prime Minister Merba Kasdi, and Algerian President Chadli Bendjedid.

Libya's Jallud Arrives on Official Visit

LD2512143688 Algiers Domestic Service in Arabic 1200 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Excerpts] Staff Major 'Abd al-Salam Ahmad Jallud arrived this morning in Algiers. At 1100 the Libyan Arab Airlines plane landed at Houari Boumedienne International Airport. Staff Maj 'Abd al-Salam Ahmad Jallud was on board and he left the place accompanied by the Algerian ambassador to Libya Abdelkader Hadjar.

He was welcomed by the secretary general of the FLN Central Committee Abdelhamid Mehri, and Boualem (Delluoci), the officer in charge of international affairs of the FLN. [passage omitted]

At the VIP lounge at the airport Staff Maj 'Abd al-Salam Ahmad Jallud said to the national newsmen:

[Begin recording] I am happy to come to my country once more. [words indistinct] I am carrying the greetings and congratulations of brother Mu'ammar and the other brothers in the leadership and the Libyan Arab people to the president for the confidence granted to him by the Algerian people [words indistinct].

We will discuss many issues that concern our nation and world. We will discuss all the issues of interest to us like the federation project and assess the (? unionist) action, and speeding up (? the idea) of the five-sided unionist action, and the Palestinian issue [words indistinct].

In actual fact there is a significant misrepresentation by the Arab and international media with (? regard) to the Palestinian revolution; in actual fact four-fifths of Palestine was conceded in return for one-fifth. Even this fifth the enemy refuses to give up.

The enemies of our nation threaten everyone who says no or resists and [word indistinct] in the same way as the Libyan Arab people are being exposed [words indistinct] the United States itself knows that Libya has no intention nor has the ability to [words indistinct] but we refuse to concede the pan-Arab right in Palestine.

We say no to abandoning Palestine. The United States wants to delude the world and is irrational. We are being punished for our pan-Arab stance and not because of a chemical weapons factory or something else. We are being punished for our pan-Arab stance, but we are prepared to put up with its results [word indistinct]. [end recording]

The visit of Staff Maj 'Abd al-Salam Jallud to Algiers comes at a time when fraternal Libya is being exposed to a hostile campaign by the U.S. Administration in preparation for a premeditated military aggression against the fraternal Libyan people.

U.S. President Reagan's threat for chemical (? weapons) remains the subject of condemnation and resentment by the nations and peace-loving forces in the world. [passage omitted]

Received by Bendjedid

LD2512175388 Algiers Television Service in Arabic 1700 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] On the national scene we record the audience given by Mr Chedli Bendjedid, president of the Republic, today to Staff Major 'Abd al-Salam Jallud, member of the Revolutionary Command of the Arab Libyan Jamahiriyah.

The meeting took place in the presence of the FLN secretary-general, the minister of the foreign affairs, and the two countries ambassadors.

Staff Maj 'Abd al-Salam Jallud arrived this morning in Algiers. He was welcomed at Houari Boumediene Airport by Mr. 'Abdelhamid Mehri, secretary general of the front.

During this short visit to our country, Mr Jallud conveyed the congratulations of the Libyan leadership and people to President Chadli Bendjedid for the trust put in him by the Algerian people at the presidential elections.

Mr Jallud left Algiers this afternoon.

FLN Official Discusses Domestic, Foreign Issues

PM2312163988 London AL-HAWADITH in Arabic 23 Dec 88 pp 22-23

[Interview with Abdelhamid Mehri, secretary general of the National Front Central Committee, by Thurayya al-'Asi in Algiers; date not given]

[Excerpts] AL-HAWADITH: How would you assess the results of the National Liberation Front's sixth conference held after the October incidents in the country?

Mehri: My assessment of the conference proceedings is that they generally were successful because the combatants were able to come out with one overview. We cannot, of course, conceal the fact that some reservations were voiced, and everyone still has not accepted everything.

Nevertheless, we can say that the combatants came out with convictions to preserve the National Liberation Front's principles and options—which I believe is something positive. [passage omitted]

AL-HAWADITH: Let us talk about the October incidents and what preceded and followed them. What were the motives behind the October incidents?

Mehri: The October incidents were the results of numerous factors, including overpopulation, the economic crisis resulting from the slump in oil prices, the effect of the 40 percent drop in hard currency on the state's budget, as well as unemployment. And we should not forget an important factor, namely, our closeness to Europe and our opening up to a consumer society. [passage omitted]

AL-HAWADITH: There has been much talk about foreign hands being behind the October incidents. How true in this?

Mehri: Whatever the speculations, I believe the responsibility falls on a section of Algerians before anybody else. Undoubtedly we live in a sensitive region. Algeria has many friends, but it also has rivals and enemies. The conditions the country is witnessing or conditions like the October incidents are bound to be exploited by many quarters, which are difficult to identify.

But I believe that when certain conditions emerge in a region as sensitive as ours, it is obvious that many quarters will try to exploit them. And the Algerians must prevent them from doing that. [passage omitted]

AL-HAWADITH: Observers abroad interpret what has happened as an attempt to dwarf Algeria's role abroad by preoccupying it with domestic problems. Will the painful incidents in Algeria affect its role abroad?

Mehri: As you know, Algeria maintains certain principles in its domestic and foreign policies. Such principles are not the outcome of certain conditions. They are the product of a deep-rooted historic experiment. I do not believe that the incidents which occurred in Algeria and, due to ignorance of the true and objective facts of Algerian society, were conveyed to the outside with a great deal of exaggeration, will affect Algeria's principled internal or foreign policy. [passage omitted]

AL-HAWADITH: Let us move to foreign policy and begin with the Palestinian issue, as Algeria witnessed the birth of the Palestinian state and, as we know, placed Algerian diplomacy at the Palestinian state's disposal. How do you view the impact of this step on the Palestinian issue internationally?

Mehri: I believe that the Palestinian cause has moved a major step forward. The resolutions adopted at the 19th PNC session have placed the Palestinian issue in the right position, because in the past doubts were cast on the Palestinian people's existence and their internationally recognized rights.

The idea of a Palestinian entity was also rejected. All this was eliminated by a revolutionary decision, that is, the establishment of the Palestinian state. Today the issue is based on a new fact, namely, the existence of the Palestinian state. So it is now possible to search for a formula for a peaceful solution. [passage omitted]

AL-HAWADITH: Let us move from the Arab east to the Maghreb. What stage has been reached in the efforts to build an Arab Maghreb union? And where does the Saharan Republic (Western Sahara) [SDAR] fit in this plan especially as some observers accuse Algeria of abandoning the Polisario and going back on its position on the Western Sahara?

Mehri: With regard to the Algerian position on the Saharan issue, the problem must be solved peacefully, namely, by giving the Saharan people their right to full self-determination. So far all events and developments have proved the soundness of this principled, clear stand.

This is why Algeria maintains a firm stand on this. It supports all the steps taken by the OAU, the United Nations, particularly efforts being exerted by the UN secretary general and the OAU chairman, who both have raised a new proposal, that is, to organize a free referendum and give the Saharan people their right to self-determination.

AL-HAWADITH: In your view, will the opening up to the communists and fundamentalists affect the front's course and cohesion?

Mehri: We cannot interfere in people's own convictions. All we want is that the front include those who believe to some extent in the convictions, principles, and inclinations stipulated by the national charter. If someone from

outside the front or affiliated with another trend wins the elections today, we will tell him to join the front as a member before he can assume the position of Central Committee member. We will not ask him to abandon his convictions.

AL-HAWADITH: Algeria recognizes SDAR officially, and it used to support the Polisario militarily.

Mehri: In this regard, I do not believe there has been a change in Algeria's policy. We recognize SDAR, and this recognition is not circumstantial until the referendum proves otherwise. All we desire is a peaceful and sound solution to the problem. If the Saharan people decide to be part of the Moroccan Kingdom, Algeria will not object.

I know that the Moroccan monarch, King Hasan II, says that "if the Saharan people go for independence, he will not object, and Morocco will be the first to open an embassy for them."

So it is clear that in principle the Algerian position does not conflict with that of Morocco. There may be some tactical stances, especially in the Moroccan press, but this is only natural. [passage omitted]

AL-HAWADITH: With regard to the Arab Maghreb union, two Maghreb summits were held in Algeria and a third was held in Morocco. What have you achieved so far?

Mehri: I believe that we will continue the march. Decisions were made after the Fez summit, most important of which had to do with convening another summit in the future. I believe that there has been no change in this regard.

AL-HAWADITH: It was supposed to subject the unity plan between Libya and Algeria to a referendum. What happened?

Mehri: You know that the incidents that occurred in Algeria have forced us to put our house in order first.

AL-HAWADITH: Does the plan still stand?

Mehri: Of course, the plan stands, but implementation has been postponed for a while. [passage omitted]

Egypt

Mubarak Visit to Israel Linked to PLO Talks

NC2712190888 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1850 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Cairo, 27 Dec (MENA)—Dr Butrus Ghali, minister of state for foreign affairs, stated today that Egypt, which has always underlined the need for dialogue and communication between the PLO and Israel, will continue its quest to bring about such a dialogue, particularly in light of Palestinian leader Yasir 'Arafat's initiative and the Palestinian recognition of Israel.

Dr Ghali added that to further this objective, President Husni Mubarak is willing to visit Israel if Israel agrees to begin dialogue with the PLO.

MENA Carries Mubarak AL-ANBA' Interview

NC2412154088 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1500 GMT 24 Dec 88

[Text] Kuwait, 24 Dec (MENA)—President Husni Mubarak has stressed that the Palestinian issue is an issue for us all. He said: Egypt, as usual, does not hesitate to support the Arab nation in any problem because it considers Arab cooperation and coordination to be the best course toward solidarity and harmony and achieving our objectives.

In a statement to the Kuwaiti newspaper AL-ANBA' to be published in its Sunday edition, President Mubarak disclosed certain details related to the efforts Egypt had exerted regarding the U.S.-Palestinian dialogue. He noted that when the United States opposed PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir 'Arafat's speech in Geneva, he asked Abu 'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat] to postpone his news conference until the evening.

Mubarak contacted the U.S. secretary of state despite the customary tradition of contacts between presidents, because the secretary of state was the party concerned with this issue. He said: "The Americans responded and decided to contact the PLO."

President Mubarak emphasized the importance of accepting the peace option to resolve the Palestinian issue on a just basis and not remaining in a state of stalemate or violence. He pointed out that the issue requires flexibility, logical thinking, and rationality—not pursuing slogans. He went on to say: From now on, we must uphold logic and rationality and reject empty slogans, adding: "We have people to care for, and therefore our behavior must be thoroughly studied and any decision fully assessed."

Mubarak stressed his readiness to visit Israel if such a visit would lead to resolving the Arab issue and to establishing a just peace.

He cautioned that there are forces that do not want this region to be stable, noting, "despite Shamir's intransigent stand, I am confident that with the increased peace-loving forces in Israel itself, with world public opinion's support for peace and with the U.S. moves, Shamir will inevitably respond to the peace efforts and call."

Mubarak highlighted the need for convening an Arab summit, saying: "The Arabs can meet without Egypt. We have no sensitivity about this issue. We are primarily concerned with a clear Arab atmosphere. The Arab atmosphere can only be cleared through summit meetings." He praised the relations linking Egypt with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Iraq, and Sudan and described Egyptian-Soviet relations as very good.

Mubarak pointed out that he does not believe in random decisions and that he makes his decisions after he studies and assesses a situation from all angles. After study and assessment, a decision is mature, decisive, and appropriately timed. He said that Egypt is a democratic state that believes in the freedom of speech, plurality, and dialogue and that he works through constitutional institutions.

He stressed that he will not slacken in protecting the homeland and citizens from terrorism and the violence of extremism. He stressed that his primary concern is a comprehensive reconstruction and streamlining of the economic course in order to achieve prosperity. He said: "I am building for the future, and I look forward."

The following is the text of President Mubarak's interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper AL-ANBA':

[Question] All reports emphasize that had it not been for the role that Egypt played between the PLO and the United States, the Palestinian-U.S. dialogue would have never taken place. Mr President, what are the details of this role?

[Mubarak] The Palestinian issue is an issue for us all. It has been without a just solution for 41 years. After the 1967 war and the occupation of Sinai, we used all means to regain our occupied land, through the October 1973 war, then through negotiations, and later through international arbitration until we regained Tabah. What remains is the Palestinian land.

We are in constant contact with our brothers in the Arab nation and our brothers in the PLO. We have always coordinated efforts with Jordan because it constitutes a principal factor and important side in the issue. His Majesty King Husayn made tremendous efforts in this respect and when the relations between the PLO and Jordan came to a standstill, I found it incumbent upon me to intervene.

Neither King Husayn nor Yasir 'Arafat nor any other side asked me to intervene. It is Egypt's habit not to hesitate in supporting the Arab nation in any problem or issue because it considers Arab coordination and cooperation as being the road leading to solidarity and harmony and, consequently, to achieving the pan-Arab objectives.

Egypt cannot dispense with the Arab nation, just as the Arab nation cannot dispense with Egypt. Hence, when I travel to Europe or the United States or when I meet with the leaders or envoys of friendly states, I discuss with them every topic that concerns any Arab state. This is because I speak out of my sense of duty and affiliation to the Arab nation.

Therefore, when I found there was a stalemate in the relations between the PLO and Jordan, I asked Abu 'Ammar, who was then in Cairo, to go together to Jordan. Abu 'Ammar immediately agreed, and King Husayn agreed to hold the meeting. We met in Al-'Aqaba, and this meeting produced an extreme improvement in the atmosphere of relations. I was happy with what had been accomplished.

The PNC held its session in Algiers, during which Abu 'Ammar himself touched on the Egyptian role. The PNC resolutions were very good and democratic. When it was time for Abu 'Ammar to deliver his speech in New York, the United States refused to grant him the visa, and therefore, it was decided to go to Geneva. In cooperation with the Arab countries, except those which are against the solution, Egypt made great efforts and effected complete coordination until 'Arafat delivered his speech in Geneva.

The United States rejected the speech on the pretext that it was incompatible with the agreed-upon conditions. It was unreasonable to let this opportunity pass without achieving anything. There were specific points in 'Arafat's speech that met all conditions and confirmed the serious responsible Palestinian course toward peace. Abu 'Ammar decided to hold a news conference to criticize the United States. It was indeed a sort of frustration and as an Arab nation, we had to support him and move.

With the cooperation of the Arab foreign ministers in Geneva, I asked Abu 'Ammar to postpone his news conference until the evening. I decided to contact the U.S. secretary of state because I knew he was concerned with the issue, despite protocol's dictating that contacts be held between heads of state.

I told him: You know how much effort has been made for the PNC to adopt the resolutions as they are. There is a paper which the Swedish foreign minister and Abu 'Ammar have agreed upon which stipulates Israel's right to exist, a Palestinian recognition of Resolutions 242 and 338, and discusses the international conference and renunciation of terrorism.

I told him: You just read Abu 'Ammar's Geneva speech carefully, and you will find that these points are covered although they are scattered throughout the speech. I do not know what else you want. I also told him: Do not forget that Abu 'Ammar is meeting opposition and is not free to say everything you want. He has, however, given you all the points for which you have asked and which have been agreed upon in the PNC resolutions.

I asked Shultz to take a step forward on that day. I also explained to him that with this behavior they were embarrassing their friends in the region and that they must take a step forward, especially as the Palestinians had fulfilled their side of the bargain. During the conversation I felt that something was inevitably going to happen.

In fact, they [the Americans] informed me that night that they had responded to this and had decided to contact the PLO. I consider this an Arab gain, not an Egyptian gain, because when we speak, we speak as Arabs.

[Question] Mr President, during your telephone conversation with George Shultz, did you threaten to take certain steps in the event the United States persisted in its stand toward the PLO?

[Mubarak] Threats are not desirable terms in this age. Threats are the language of the weak. We Arabs are strong, strong with our cause, will, and rights. Why should we threaten instead of talking things over? Why should we not resort to dialogue and persuasion to obtain our goals and uphold our rights?

[Question] For over 40 years, the Arabs have refused to coexist with Israel. Does the acceptance of the international conference and the Arab-Palestinian peace offensive mean that the option of war and rejection adopted by some Arab regimes has fallen through? Does it also mean the acceptance of the option of peace adopted by Egypt 10 years ago?

[Mubarak] War will not solve any issue. Absolute rejection will not secure any objective. Give me an example in the whole world in which a war has settled an issue. The war between Vietnam and America? America, the superpower, sat with Vietnam at the negotiating table to settle the conflict.

We fought in order to reactivate the situation; it was in fact reactivated. We must keep up this activity through negotiations. From now on we must adhere to logic and reason and abandon empty slogans. There are nations behind us. We must carefully watch our activity. We must fully assess the situation before making any decision.

[Question] Mr President, what is your advice to the PLO in the coming stage?

[Mubarak] The PLO has worked hard and has proven that it is serious, responsible, and credible in its desire for a just peace. I believe that some of their leaders should stop making statements that give the opposing forces an opportunity to harm them. In my opinion, if these intransigent elements are incapable of making statements benefitting the issue, they must adhere to the virtue of silence, because in this case if speech is silver, silence is gold. May God guide them.

We want a just solution. We do not want to remain in a stalemate or in an atmosphere of violence. The issue requires flexibility, logical thinking, and wise behavior—not running after slogans.

[Question] Are there fears that Mossad may exploit the Arab peace offensive by carrying out terrorist acts attributed to the PLO?

[Mubarak] This talk is not new. This was reported by a U.S. television network and certain U.S. newspapers. We also mentioned it to many parties in Europe and the United States. Abu 'Ammar now talks about peace and wants to achieve it through negotiations and on the basis of international law and legality. Despite this, we must not imagine that he is free to do anything. There are forces opposed to peace, perhaps inside the Palestinian circles themselves.

There are also forces in Israel that do not want peace. Some of these forces here or there may try to subvert the peace efforts. I am not specifying any party, but I maintain that all the forces that do not want peace may seek to subvert it through terrorist acts.

We heard reports that when 'Arafat intended to deliver his speech at the United Nations in New York there was a plan for a terrorist act. They wanted to carry it out during the speech. Why? "To torpedo the peace. There are forces that do not want this region to be stable, and we sometimes unknowingly give them the chance to do that."

[Question] Mr President, you have not as yet visited Israel. Would you visit it if such a visit would solve the Palestinian issue in its entirety?

[Mubarak] Why not? If such a visit would lead to resolving the issue and to establishing a just peace, I would be ready. But it must be clear that I do not travel anywhere unless I am sure that there are advantages to or results from my travel. Personally, I do like travel. Before I embark on a trip, I make good calculations. I assess changes and moves to make use of travel. If there is no use, I do not travel.

It is not a matter of formal movements void of substance and interest. Should the need arise for me to go to Israel to resolve our Arab issue, there would be no objection. Our contacts with Israel are public. We consult and discuss with them, and this is the best method for resolving our issues.

[Question] Do you believe that a change will occur in the U.S. role toward establishing peace in the region when Bush assumes power, or do you expect Bush to continue with Reagan's policy which was somehow characterized by vagueness at times and at others by bias toward Israel's understanding of the conflict?

[Mubarak] The characteristic that the new U.S. President possesses is that he does not come from outside the U.S. Administration. He has, therefore, encountered and studied these issues. I think that Bush and his administration must have envisioned some moves. We are linked with the United States by very good relations, although the issue is not merely good ties. We talk to them using logic, and by logic we, Israel, and all parties and international forces can move.

[Question] Mr President, do you believe that Israel under Shamir's government will eventually accept peace and participation in an international peace conference?

[Mubarak] Despite Shamir's intransigent stand, I am sure that with the increase in the peace-loving forces in Israel along with world public opinion's support for peace and U.S. moves, Shamir will inevitably respond to the peace efforts and call.

[Question] Your Excellency, there are attempts to clear the Arab air, particularly with regard to Egyptian-Syrian and Egyptian-Libyan relations. How far have these attempts reached?

[Mubarak] Regarding Libya, frankly, I do not trust the ruler of Libya. He does not like Egypt or the Egyptians. Even though we have halted the media campaigns against Libya at their request, they have continued their campaigns against us. Their campaigns do not frighten me or the Egyptian people. Egypt is an open society where there is freedom, democracy, and free opinion. But if I unleash my campaigns, they will be painful.

You can see the extent of the ruler of Libya's hatred of Egypt. He categorically refused to have the Egyptian ambassador in Tunisia invited to a dinner hosted in his honor during his recent visit to Tunis. I excuse Tunisia because Libya's ruler was its guest. Also when 'Arafat was in Geneva to deliver his speech, our foreign minister hosted a dinner banquet in honor of the Arab foreign ministers and asked Abu 'Ammar to invite the Syrian and Libyan ministers to the banquet.

I told him to invite them, but they did not come. In fact, I asked Dr 'Abd al-Majid to invite them. It became clear that the Syrian foreign minister did not in fact come to Geneva because Syria considers itself to be outside the case. The Libyan ambassador naturally did not attend the banquet. [words indistinct] Has not stopped contacting us. We have nothing to fear. But on our side, we have halted all contacts with them.

Regarding Syria, I met with President al-Asad during the Islamic conference in Kuwait. [words indistinct] The meeting was spontaneous and coincidental. I was on my way to the big conference hall when I found Al-Asad standing with [UAE President] Shaykh Zayid. I walked over to them and shook hands with them.

I told Al-Asad: Is it sensible that we should remain like this? I do not want anything from Syria. Syria is an Arab country. I am willing to visit you in your country. He said: But I want to know what the results will be.

Here I ask: Do I have to abrogate the international commitments I have signed? No one accepts such a thing and it is unreasonable. There are mediation attempts with Syria now. I have no objection to reopening the dialogue with them but without preconditions.

[Question] Recent reports from Syria say that Damascus will not object to Egypt's return to the Arab League on the condition that Egypt pressures Iraq to take its hands off Lebanon.

[Mubarak] Without being conceited, Egypt is a gain for the Arab League, just as the Arabs are a gain for Egypt. All the Arab countries, with the exception of Syria and Libya, have no objections to Egypt's return to the Arab League. In general, I do not like to talk about this issue. As for the question on whether I exert pressure on Iraq to take its hands off Lebanon [word indistinct] Syria is unacceptable.

We do not exert pressure on anyone, let alone fraternal Iraq. Anyhow, this problem is between Syria and Iraq. President Al-Asad can solve it with Iraq. There are deep-rooted problems between Syria and Iraq, and all can be resolved through (?dialogue), reason, and good intentions. As for Lebanon, it is better for Syria to take its hands off that country.

[Question] Mr President, how can the Lebanese problem be solved?

[Mubarak] If we can reach a solution satisfactory to all the parties concerned with the Palestinian issue, then the Lebanese problem will be resolved despite everybody, whether those responsible there are pleased or not. Israel will be forced to withdraw from Lebanon if the international conference is held, and Syria will have no pretext or excuse to remain in Lebanon. Syria must then respond to the international conference resolutions.

[Question] Saudi Arabia has declared that the next Arab summit conference will convene only when the Arab atmosphere has been cleared.

[Mubarak] Excuse me, but I hold different views on this issue. I believe that the Arab summit should convene and if they fear that Syria and Libya might make something happen because of Egypt, they still can convene without Egypt. We have no sensitivity about this subject. What concerns us in the first place is that the Arab atmosphere should be purified, and this can only be achieved through summit meetings.

The African summit convenes every year, and during it all inter-African contradictions are solved and the atmosphere completely purified. Therefore, it is unreasonable not to convene an Arab summit because we have differences. Why, therefore, do we meet? Certainly to patch up the differences. If we stop action and exchanges because there are differences among certain Arab parties, we will never meet in 100 years.

The Arab summit, in addition to its distinctive marks, would enable mediators to perform their role in reconciling the various Arab sides.

[Question] What about King Fahd's visit to Cairo, particularly since the date of the visit has been set more than once?

[Mubarak] The date has not been set. These were rumors published by certain papers. At any rate, I believe that the visit is agreed upon, and perhaps it will take place in March 1989. It concerns me here to reiterate that our relations with the brothers in Saudi Arabia are at their best in terms of understanding, coordination, and cooperation.

Our relations with all the brothers in the GCC are the same way. We sincerely support the GCC's march in the interest of its states and that of all the Arab countries.

[Question] Recently, [Iraqi] President Saddam Husayn paid a surprise visit to Egypt. Was this visit to thank Egypt for its stand on Iraq's war against Iran, or was it to push forward the peace process in the Middle East and to coordinate stands?

[Mubarak] The relations between Egypt and Iraq are historic and based on pan-Arabism. They are characterized by solidarity, mutual assistance, and close cooperation. Egypt has helped Iraq because of its pan-Arab duty. There are 3 million Egyptians in Iraq helping their brothers in labor and production. I saw these people in the streets of Baghdad during my visit. I felt as if I was in an Egyptian town.

President Saddam Husayn does not forget any service rendered by Egypt. He said he will visit Egypt at the first available opportunity, even for a day. He honored what he promised, and I was happy with his surprise visit. Indeed, I was happy to have a brother here. It should be understood by us, everyone in the Gulf states, and in all the Arab countries that our relations with Iraq do not aim to create an Arab axis.

Neither he nor we think of forming axes. We attach importance to the Gulf states in the same way we attach importance to Iraq and the other Arab brothers. Our relations with any state can never be at the expense of another state. This is impossible. Egypt cooperated with Iraq during its war with Iran.

The main reason for this is our duty to support Iraq and our brothers in the Gulf. Throughout this period we were keen on maintaining meticulous calculations so that Iran would not extend its war and threaten the entire Gulf.

[Question] What about the Egyptian prisoners in Iran?

[Mubarak] They are like the Iraqi prisoners. We are cooperating with Iraq in this regard and are making efforts for the sake of all prisoners. We are not prepared to make any concessions to ensure the release of the Egyptian prisoners and leave the Iraqis. They are all our citizens whether they are Egyptians or Iraqis or from any other Arab country.

[Question] Observers noticed in the recent past that Egyptian-Sudanese relations have been lukewarm. Is this true?

[Mubarak] Egyptian-Sudanese relations are historic, deep, and ones of common fate and interests. I do not know where you get this information. There is no coolness in ties between us and our brothers in Sudan. We are careful not to interfere in their domestic affairs, but we constantly cooperate with Sudan in our common interests. We contributed toward improving their ties with Ethiopia.

We may be able to reach an agreement between them and the Ethiopians. God only knows the magnitude of effort we exerted in this issue. Regarding their relations with Libya, it is their own business. We are content to give advice when we are asked for it. Our advice is free of any personal interests. We have contacts with Garang's groups.

Sudan reached an agreement with Garang, and it was announced by the Al-Mirghani party. I fear that the other parties may seek to destroy this agreement. All parties are asked to face up to their responsibilities in the interest of all Sudan. They must not view things from a sad angle. As long as the agreement achieves the public's interests, all officials must honor it even if the party that reached it was the smallest party.

[Question] Mr President, what about Egyptian-Soviet relations?

[Mubarak] Very good relations. We consult with them on all international issues of common concern. Strong economic ties exist between us and the Soviet union. [Foreign Minister] Dr 'Ismat visited the Soviet Union, and the visit was successful for both countries. The Soviet Union is one of the two superpowers in the world, and we cannot ignore it; otherwise our calculations would be unsound.

I visited the Soviet Embassy recently to register my and the people's condolences over the catastrophe that had befallen them. We sent them aid proportionate to our resources and expressed our heart-felt sympathy in their disaster. I will definitely visit the Soviet Union at an appropriate time, but nothing has yet been determined regarding such a visit.

[Question] What about Shevardnadze's visit to Cairo?

[Mubarak] Shevardnadze is scheduled to visit Cairo, but I think that the disastrous earthquake will delay or postpone his visit for some time.

[Question] The issue of the Tabah file has at last been closed. But the Al-Sultan Monastery remains open. Are there any negotiations between Egypt and Israel over this issue?

[Mubarak] Ethiopia is a party to this issue; therefore, I do not want to deal with it now.

[Question] Washington did not agree, and we did not ask it to write them off. We only asked for convenient rescheduling of these debts. The Soviet Union has not accepted any interest and has given us a 6-year grace period provided that we pay off our debts in installments for 19 years and with Egyptian goods. This is a very convenient position for me. The Soviet Union works to stimulate my exports and does not put any burden on me.

[Question] What is your view of his highness the Kuwaiti amir's proposals regarding Third World debts?

[Mubarak] After his highness delivered his speech at the United Nations, which I heard in its entirety, I sent him congratulations. I admired him because he spoke of the debt problem despite the fact that he is head of a creditor, not a debtor state. In fact, I consider his proposals a daring and honorable Arab step taken by a great Arab leader.

[Question] Mr President, some people are asking about the reason for the delay in making decisive decisions on some vital internal questions in Egypt which need quick decisions.

[Mubarak] There is no delay in decisionmaking as this is not in my nature. On the contrary, I, in view of my nature, upbringing, and the nature of my former job, tend toward quick decisions and quick action. But things should not be left merely to whims and dispositions. The decisions concern the fate of the nation and the interests of the people.

These issues need in-depth and detailed studies and the sound and attentive assessment of all the dimensions of the problems, their results, their possible repercussions, and their effects on the fate and future of the masses' fate and future. The problems that require decisions are by their nature complicated and interlinked and must be studied in detail because a single hasty or unstudied decision might have grave consequences. These might not affect an individual but extend to the people's interest and the nation's future.

Then there is the proper timing factor in making the decision and the need for harmony without hastiness or delay. Proper timing is one of the most important factors in decisionmaking. This is a big responsibility that should not be belittled. We should not forget that hasty and precipitate decisions are the hallmark of totalitarian rule where there are no reactions, queries, or objections.

In democratic countries, the importance of consultations, studies, and the public opinion must be taken into consideration. Also, we should not forget the critical and particular circumstances in Egypt and the extent of the accumulation and complications of problems that have remained without tackling for dozens of years. In such a situation, the entrusting of responsibility requires more rationality and prudence.

I do not believe in the policy of haphazard decisions. I make decisions after studying and evaluating the situation from all its aspects. Hence the decision will be successful, decisive, and attentive to the appropriate situation. This is, in my opinion, the only right way, though I have said that I act quickly because of my nature and upbringing.

[Question] Some people see in the way the government is dealing with the capital investment companies' crisis an example of delay and slowness in making decisions.

[Mubarak] Had the government decided a long time before this on this matter, then the depositors would have been the first to complain of it in the belief that the state is depriving them of high rates of profits which were distributed to them at the beginning. Had the government delayed in enacting the law, the situation would have led to a certain catastrophe for the depositors and the national economy. That is why there was a need for proper timing.

A detailed study was necessary. Before the law was passed, I had discussions with some depositors and tried to explain the dangers to them. They hastened to beg us not to interfere since they can do what they want with their money and are content with the situation. When the central bank governor warned of these dangers, he was severely attacked, and some people increased their deposits.

Had the law been passed in a hasty manner and at an earlier time, these companies or some of them would have claimed that they had intended to return the money were it not for the government's intervention. But when things began to be exposed, when two of the largest companies were merged, when payments began to falter, and when deviations began to appear clearly, the law aimed at protecting depositors and the national economy from the hemorrhage of money and its transfer abroad was issued.

Amazingly, some people have deposited large amounts even after the law was issued and the facts were exposed. Had we issued the law before then, we would have been accused of depriving depositors of their profits and had we delayed the issuance of the law, then it would have been a certain catastrophe.

[Question] Mr President, the investment laws in Egypt are still scaring off Arab capital because of the red tape, the numerous and conflicting laws, and the multiplicity of the sources of authority. What is your comment?

[Mubarak] I do not think there is anything to justify this. The increasing contribution by Egyptian capital to the development process is the best indication that these fears are unjustifiable. We have made great strides

toward eliminating carelessness, red tape, and the multiplicity of the sources of authority. We have removed and are still removing hurdles and obstacles from the vestiges of the past.

We are on the way to facilitate the investment process and solve investors' problems. I tell those who entertain doubts regarding our economic situation: What has happened to the finance investment companies will not affect existing production projects or the investment activity.

The investment atmosphere in Egypt will witness a new positive surge in the coming stage through the issuance of the unified law. This law will encourage the private sector and will create spheres for productive and rewarding work for all. For our part, we will make all facilities because we have an interest in increasing production.

[Question] Mr President, Egypt is a target of a campaign to weaken it internally by two weapons, the weapon of extremism and the weapon of narcotics. What is your comment?

[Mubarak] We are a democratic state which believes in freedom of opinion, pluralism, and dialogue. However, like any other democratic country, we naturally cannot fail to protect the citizens and the homeland from terrorism, violence, and extremism. This is done in accordance with the Constitution and law and in the interest of the people and the future of this nation.

We must not exaggerate and inflate the phenomenon of extremism in Egypt for it is much less than in other states. Some are trying to exaggerate and inflate this phenomenon because we are a democratic state that allows freedom of expression.

If the ruling regime in Egypt were totalitarian, we would have put all the subversive elements in prison and gotten rid of them in one stroke. In this case, no one would ask me why did I do this, nor would anyone refer to this subject, and many people would possibly suffer unfairly.

However, in Egypt there is something called law which we respect. As for narcotics, we are very firm and decisive in taking every measure to fight this subversive activity and eliminate it once and for all. The whole world testifies that Egypt has very efficient anti-drug security authorities. In general, Egypt is not the only targeted country.

There is no state in the world, regardless of its security resources, which does not have a drug problem. The best example is the United States itself. Despite its huge security resources, such as the FBI and other agencies, the United States has a drug problem.

Generally speaking, the index of drug smuggling crimes in Egypt is continually declining. We hope we will eliminate this problem once and for all.

[Question] Mr President, how do you feel the pulse of the ordinary Egyptian citizen, his hopes, and his suffering?

[Mubarak] Through my constant meeting with people in their place of work—in the factory, in the school, and in the fields. I am keen on meeting the citizens with open dialogue and without restriction. I open my heart to all small and big questions. I do not hide anything and do not beat around the bush. The Egyptian people are patient. When they understand something, they respond sincerely and with concern for their future. The people's pulse is my pulse, their trouble is my trouble, and their happiness is my happiness.

[Question] Mr President, what is your principal concern regarding all Egypt's problems?

[Mubarak] The comprehensive reconstruction and rectification of the economic course so that prosperity will be achieved in Egypt. I am building for the future. It would be easy for me during my years in office to drown the people with tremendous promises and to meet their needs through temporary sedatives regardless of the country's capabilities. But I just cannot work in this way. I like planning and arranging my matters, and I draw up a list of priorities.

When I first took office, the economic problem was my greatest worry and principal concern. We held an economic conference according to which we drew up the First 5-Year-Plan. This plan produced huge achievements. In Cairo alone we built a bridge or a tunnel every month. The result was 56 bridges and tunnels. Electricity has increased one and one-half fold. We will have 56 billion kilowatts of electricity by the end of this year. That is three times as much as the electricity supplied to Egypt in 75 years.

During the First 5-Year Plan we built far more houses than those built in Egypt during the 25 years before the plan. We constructed thousands of kilometers of new roads. Work is under way in Cairo to construct the biggest sewage project in the world. We have built 13 cities in the desert. Life and production have started in seven of these cities which are: Al-Sadat, 6 October, 10 Ramadan, Al-'Amiriyah, 15 Mayu, Al-Salihiyah, and Al-Nubariyah. These cities are with all standards a pride to Egypt. You must visit them.

[Question] What about the issue of housing, Mr President. You are the best placed to understand the sufferings of thousands on this issue.

[Mubarak] Housing is an issue in the entire world, even in the United States, England, and France. In the first years of the plan we built a million new housing units although we only built 700,000 housing units in the 15 year that preceded the plan.

[Question] Mr President, with your current burden should you not have a vice president to shoulder some of the burden?

[Mubarak] I work through constitutional institutions, and I am not shouldering the burden alone. There is the Cabinet, there is the People's Assembly, there are the assistants and advisers and all the state's organs. We have freedom, democracy, and pluralism. We have the people and our constant desire is to conduct an open expanded dialogue with them.

[Question] Mr President, do you not see that the rate of population growth in Egypt might obstruct development projects?

[Mubarak] We have a national plan for family planning. As you know, the fruit of such plans takes a long time to appear. This is because while we are working on family planning, we have another plan to take care of children which has greatly reduced their death rate. Although the family planning scheme has produced positive results in reducing the number of births, the population has increased in the same period of time due to the decrease in the death rate of children.

Had the family planning scheme been successfully implemented 15 or 20 years ago, the results would have been much better. But I am destined to deal with all problems at the same time. The problems are difficult and knotty, but we manage to solve them. We have great hopes to overcome many of these problems. What counts is the willpower, planning, implementation, and followup. There is always hope in the future of Egypt and in the future of its people.

[Question] Mr President, how do you spend your free time?

[Mubarak] I have no free time. I almost feel that I am the only detainee in Egypt. Everyone practices freedom and democracy, and everyone demands more. I myself cannot exercise freedom in choosing the most simple things.

[Question] But at least you can choose the colors of your clothes.

[Mubarak] [Laughing] I believe this choice is one of the few freedoms left to me.

[Question] Do you not listen to songs?

[Mubarak] Yes. I rarely listen to light music. I listen to [famous Egyptian singers] Umm Kulthum and 'Abd al-Wahhab. Actually I prefer to listen to patriotic songs which enhance determination and are sung in praise of the homeland.

President Receives Kuwaiti Labor Minister

LD2612143088 Kuwait KUNA in English 1251 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Cairo, Dec 26 (KUNA)—Egyptian President Husni Mubarak Monday received visiting Kuwait Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Shaykh Nasir Muhammad al-Ahmad in the presence of his Egyptian counterpart Dr. Amal 'Uthman and Kuwaiti ambassador here 'Abd al-Razak al-Kandari.

Shaykh Nasir said that he conveyed to President Mubarak greetings of h.h. the amir, h.h. the crown prince and premier and the deputy premier and foreign minister.

He added that issues of mutual concern were discussed with the president particularly in fields of social affairs and labor.

Asked on date of h.h. the amir of Kuwait's visit to Cairo, the minister said that there was an official invitation to the amir and that the date was not fixed yet.

For her part, Dr. Amal said that the meeting was positive and tackled various questions of concern to both countries in addition to cooperation between the two ministries.

She added that a number of agreements are being discussed and said that insurance on Egyptian workers in Kuwait will be discussed during here forthcoming visit to Kuwait, date of which was still to be fixed.

The two countries and extended her government's thanks, on the occasion, to the Kuwaiti Government for building the data center in Alexandria as a gift to Egypt.

Officials Comment on Relations With Syria

JN2712181488 Abu Dhabi AL-ITTIHAD in Arabic 26 Dec 88 pp 1, 21

[Excerpt] Amman and Cairo, AL-ITTIHAD and news agencies—High-level Egyptian political sources have affirmed to AL-ITTIHAD Egypt's readiness to hold any meeting with Syria on the highest level.

They pointed out that the efforts exerted by Saudi Arabia and Jordan to mend the rift in Egyptian-Syrian relations aim to arrange a meeting between President Husni Mubarak and President Hafiz al-Asad in Riyadh or Amman.

These sources revealed that a relaxation has taken place in Egyptian-Syrian relations due to efforts made by a number of Gulf and Arab states that seek to reinstate Egypt in the Arab League, restore full solidarity to the Arab world, and convene an Arab summit conference.

The high-level Egyptian political sources have asserted the existence of a state, which they described as warm, in relations between Egypt and Syria. According to these sources, although this warmth has melted the existing ice, it has not been translated into practical steps.

Commenting on what Damascus radio had broadcast about Syria's readiness to improve its relations with Egypt and that the improvement of relations between the two countries comes within the pan-Arab responsibilities of both countries, the same sources said that Egypt is ready to open a dialogue with Syria to achieve a formula that will restore Arab solidarity to the way it was before 1973, provided that this dialogue is not accompanied by any conditions imposed on Egypt, because it had actually transcended all the stages that separated it and the Arab nation.

The same sources have asserted that Egypt believes there are no differences between it and Syria that cannot be transcended because the differences center on methods to achieve the common pan-Arab objectives. They also asserted Egypt's readiness to hold any meeting with Syria on the highest level, as was said by President Mubarak.

They pointed out that the efforts exerted by Saudi Arabia and Jordan to mend the rift in Egyptian-Syrian relations aim to arrange a meeting between President Husni Mubarak and President Hafiz al-Asad in Riyadh or Amman.

The sources added that during the recent contacts, Egypt has informed Saudi Arabia and Jordan that Egypt does not accept that its foreign policy be determined by any side and that Syria must accept Egypt's policy without any conditions. [passage omitted]

Libya

Algerian Minister Visits Pharmaceutical Plant

LD2712133088 Tripoli Voice of Greater Arab Homeland in Arabic 1230 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Dr Messaoud Zitouni, minister of public health in fraternal Algeria, yesterday evening visited the drugs and medicinal compounds plant accompanied by the secretary of the General People's Committee for Health. He familiarized himself with the functioning of the plant and the production lines which will produce 50 medical drugs.

Dr Messaoud Zitouni also toured the new residential village "Al-Rabtah" where the plant is situated. He met with doctors, pharmacists, and nurses who are holding a sit-in in the plant and he also met with members of the Basic People's Congresses who have joined the doctors, pharmacists, and nurses in the sit-in.

The Algerian minister of public health stressed that the plant is a positive step toward the achieving security in the Arab pharmaceutical industry. He expressed Algeria's readiness to contribute to joint operation of the plant.

The Algerian health minister expressed his amazement at the accusations levelled at this medical plant stressing that the plant is a significant civilizational accomplishment for humanity.

Envoy Says Chemical Plant Open To View

LD2712161688 Budapest MTI in English 1525 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Budapest, December 27 (MTI)—Fathi M. al-Misrati, secretary of the People's Office in Budapest of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriyah, held a press conference of limited attendance on Tuesday. Reconfirming the position of his homeland, he rejected the Washington accusations according to which Libya had built a unit suitable for the production of chemical weapons.

This accusation, the secretary stressed, is used by the government of the United States as a pretext to prepare an armed attack against Libya. The unit under construction with international participation serves peaceful aims: Following its completion, it will produce pharmaceuticals and agricultural chemicals.

In answer to a question by MTI's correspondent, the diplomat reconfirmed that Libya is ready to submit to an international supervision following the inauguration of the unit:

Both journalists and experts can view the unit. Libya will be a participant to the international conference dealing with chemical weapons, scheduled to be held in Paris in January.

Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister Arrives

LD2512152388 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 1437 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] Tripoli, 25 Dec (JANA)—Grigor Georgiev Stoichkov, the Bulgarian deputy prime minister, and the delegation accompanying him arrived in Tripoli this morning on a visit to the Great Jamahiriyah.

He made a statement to a JANA correspondent hailing bilateral relations. The Bulgarian deputy prime minister indicated that this visit falls within the framework of relations of cooperation existing between the two friendly peoples in various fields.

Received by Foreign Secretary

LD2612131388 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 1130 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Tripoli, 26 Dec (JANA)—In Tripoli this morning the brother secretary of the People's Committee of the People's Bureau for Foreign Liaison met with Grigor Stoichkov, deputy chairman of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers.

During the meeting they reviewed fraternal bilateral relations and the means to consolidate and develop them for the benefit of the two friendly peoples.

The meeting was attended by the Bulgarian Ambassador to the Great Jamahiriyah.

PDRY's Salim al-Bid Contacts Al-Qadhdhafi

LD2712093988 Tripoli Television Service in Arabic 2000 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Brother 'Ali Salim al-Bid, secretary general of the PDRY Socialist Party, contacted the brother leader of the revolution by telephone today.

Brother 'Ali Salim al-Bid affirmed that all the PDRY's resources are at the disposal of the Libyan Arab people and its leadership in confronting U.S. imperialism, in order to put an end to this encroachment on the Arab nation.

Brother 'Ali Salim al-Bid denounced the U.S. imperialist attitude which has no justification except hatred of the Arab nation and confirmation of the arrogant spirit of U.S. imperialism, which is hostile to the aspirations of the Arab nation.

Sudan

'Thousands' Demonstrate Against Price Hikes

EA2712191188 Khartoum SUNA in English 1705 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Khartoum, Dec. 27 (SUNA)—Thousands of people took to Khartoum downtown today protesting Monday's prices hikes announced by the government only twenty four hours after it issued a more than three hundred percent increase in minimum wages.

The demonstrations which gained momentum in the major towns of central Sudan of Madani and northern Sudan town of 'Atbarah have been waged by workers and small-income citizens.

(Against hunger ...Against war).. (No ..No for the rule of the International Monetary Fund) (Down ..Down with the rule of the masters (reference to Premier al-Sadiq al-Mahdi and DUP [Democratic Unionist Party] leader Muhammad 'Uthman al-Mirghani) (Disobedience is a legal weapon) (Religion merchants have stolen the supplies) Those were part of the slogans chanted by the demonstrators in the centre of the national capital.

Meanwhile in the central capital of Wad Madani, south of Khartoum, about seventy five trade unions today signed a document announcing work stoppage in the town (as long as the government has not reconsidered its new economic policies).

SUNA's office in Madani the second largest city in the Sudan has reported that huge demonstrations moved in waves and sieged the premises of the central region governor.

The rioters in the city have been chanting slogans calling for the ouster of the government and the resignation of its premier.

In both Khartoum and Madani police has kept away and did not intervene, however the protestors did not loot any property stripping police of a pretext to intervene.

On the other hand a four day general stay-away-from-work has been announced by the workers trade union in the biggest railway centre, in the town of 'Atbarah.

The four day stay-away, effective from today morning, is also in protest against the economic measures adopted by the government.

Railway workers and employees in the various sectors walked out in mass in the town demonstrating against the new policies.

In the meantime the powerful Sudanese Workers' Trade Union Federation (SWTUF) has issued a statement denouncing the new price hikes and saying it would organize a huge demonstration tomorrow to the Council of Ministers where a memo, stating the position of SWTUF, will be handed to the premier.

Finance Minister Reacts to Demonstration

EA2712191888 Khartoum SUNA in English 1716 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Khartoum, Dec 27 SUNA—In a first official reaction to the furious demonstrations broke out in the capital and some other regional towns today following the government's announcement of a new huge commodities price's hike Finance Minister Dr. 'Umar Nur al-Da'im admitted the new economic measures are crucial but he said the government has no other way to take for facing the deteriorated economic situation.

The minister who was speaking to a press conference here today called on the people to go for production and abandon their declared strikes affirming that there is no mysterious solutions to the economic problems.

Nur al-Da'im explained that the heavest burden of the new economic measures will fall directly on the above medium and high income sectors.

The minister went on to say that the new austerity measures have off only 30 percent of the recently declared increase in wages and salary scales.

Asked on the possibility of reconsidering the recent economic measures in light of the severe popular reactions against them the minister said the cabinet is the competent body in such affairs (but he indicated that flexibility is not out of being exercised). [sentence as received]

Ruling Party Appeals to Citizens for Calm

LD2812123988 Khartoum SUNA in English 1018 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Khartoum, Dec. 28 (SUNA)—The Ummah Party parliamentary group led by Premier al-Sadiq al-Mahdi has raised a memo to the cabinet calling for a cabinet's reconsideration to its recent economic measures.

The group which held a meeting here yesterday chaired by Premier al-Mahdi appealed to other ruling parties "National Islamic Front and the Democratic Unionist Party" to raise similar recommendations and also appealed to citizens to keep calm and avoid any actions that harm the country's supreme interests.

Trade Union Federation Calls for General Strike

EA2812154988 Khartoum SUNA in English 1100 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Khartoum, 28 Dec—Sudan's workers trade unions federation (SWTF) today decided to go in an open strike as from tomorrow, Thursday, and until the government reconsiders its latest economic decisions.

The SWTF also raised a memo to the premier, denouncing the decisions and calling for their repeal. It is worth noting that the government has (?methodically) decided a huge increase in prices of basic commodities, particularly sugar, with the imposition of new direct taxes.

Further Details

NC2812134388 Paris AFP in English 1313 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Khartoum, Dec 28 (AFP)—Sudan's powerful Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation (SWTUF) called Wednesday for a general strike to force the government to drop price hikes it ordered Monday on basic commodities, including a 500 per cent rise for sugar.

The SWTUF has nearly two million public and private sector members, and was instrumental in the ousting of the regime of Marshal Ja'far Numayri in April 1985. General Secretary Mahub al-Zubayr told 10,000 demonstrators at Union H.Q. here—despite emergency regulations activated on December 19 bar such gatherings—that the strike would start Thursday and last indefinitely.

The government was failing in its commitments by taking away with one hand what it had given the other, he said.

Mr. al-Zubayr was referring to the 500 per cent increase in minimum pay for civil servants decreed by the government last Saturday, and its later decision to up sugar prices by the same percentage and to impose a 15 per cent tax on local and imported consumer goods.

The politburo of Prime Minister al-Sadiq al-Mahdi's Al-Ummah Party met late Tuesday under Mr. al-Mahdi to ask the three-party coalition government to reconsider the price rises.

Chadian Army Moves Away From Al-Wakhaim

EA2312153188 Omdurman National Unity Radio in Arabic 1300 GMT 23 Dec 88

[Text] The National Salvation Army has started moving from the Sudanese area of Al-Wakhaim, where it has been concentrated. It has now reached Al-Tinah on the Sudanese-Chadian border. It moved under the escort and supervision of the armed forces and the operation was monitored by the deputy governor of Darfur region.

In a statement to the press, Dr al-Tijani al-Sisi, governor of Darfur, said that the Sudanese Armed Forces would strictly supervise the movement of these forces until they are completely evacuated. He said that the experience with Ibn Umar's forces would never be allowed to occur again.

The prime minister announced in the Constituent Assembly that the authorities would not negotiate with any foreigners crossing into Darfur region and such people would be dealt with seriously in accordance with the decision of the region's Security Council.

Dr al-Tijani al-Sisi took part in the Franco-African summit held in Morocco. He met Hissein Habare and discussed with him all matters of concern to the two countries, in particular the question of border security.

During a stopover in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriyah, Dr al-Tijani al-Sisi also met officials there. He explained to them the situation regarding security on the border between the Jamahiriyah and Darfur region.

Tunisia

Concern Expressed Over 'Threats' to Libya

LD2312172588 Tunis Domestic Service in Arabic 1600 GMT 23 Dec 88

[Text] A responsible source at the Foreign Ministry has made the following statement:

The Tunisian Government is following with anxiety and concern the reports of threats against Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahariyah claiming to the effect that it has a chemical weapons factory, despite the Jamahiriyah's denial of those accusations.

In any case, threats or the use of force in dealing with such a situation, in addition to its dangerous consequences for security in the Mediterranean, contradicts the relaxation being witnessed in international relations and violates the UN Charter and principles.

At a time when rapid preparations are underway for the convening of the Paris conference, which is directly concerned with finalizing a ban on the use of chemical weapons, and when Libya has declared it will participate in this conference and will adhere to the related international treaties, Tunisia, whose attitude towards chemical weapons is clear, urges restraint and avoiding the use of violence and all that is liable to complicate matters and divert us from affirming the peace efforts.

Human Rights League Protests Seizure of Weekly
NC2612141288 Paris AFP in English 1349 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Tunis, Dec 26 (AFP)—The Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH) protested Monday over the official seizure of copies of one weekly and the "multiple harassment" affecting another magazine.

The league stated that Tunisian authorities had begun legal proceedings against the director of the independent weekly REALITIES and against University Professor Hicham Djait, who wrote an editorial allegedly defamatory of Tunisian justice.

The offending December 16-22 issue of REALITIES was seized.

Last week, REALITIES and another independent weekly, LE PHARE, could not be published because of "technical problems" reported by their printers, the LTDH statement added.

The league said the effective suspension of the two papers was "in flagrant contradiction with the principles of freedom of expression and of the press" upheld in the National Pact signed by Tunisia's main political and professional groups on November 7.

Late in November, the authorities seized copies of the opposition weekly EL-MAOUKIF for publishing news of an unofficial political party, according to editorial staff.

At the time, the Tunisian Interior Ministry said it could ban publication of "any issue of a periodical likely to disturb public order". That was the first time a publication had been seized since President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali came to power in November 1987.

Deputies Ratify Election Law Amendment
LD2712083088 Tunis Domestic Service in Arabic 0700 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Last night, the House of Deputies ratified a draft statute amending the elections law.

In the introduction of the draft statute, it is said that it stems from the spirit of the 7 November statement and the statements by the head of state following it, especially the 6 February 1988 statement.

The draft amendment particularly concerns the preparations of elections lists, distributing the election cards, and consolidating the principle of impartiality of the sorting operations, in addition to the participation of the Tunisian community abroad in voting and deciding the correctness of elections.

Kuwait

Defense Ministry Warns of 'Suspicious Object'

LD2712161588 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic 1531 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Kuwait 27 Dec (KUNA)—The Kuwaiti Defense Ministry appealed to all citizens and residents today not to come closer to any suspicious object "either on the coast or inland."

In its statement the Ministry requested citizens to report this suspicious object, and has set up special telephone number for this purpose.

PDRY

Defense Minister Leaves on Visit to Cuba

EA2712195588 Aden ANA in Arabic 1747 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Excerpt] Aden, 27 Dec—Comrade Colonel Salih 'Ubayd Ahmad, member of the Political Bureau and minister of defense, left for Havana this evening to attend the celebrations of the friendly Cuban people marking the 33d anniversary of the victory of the Cuban revolution. [passage omitted]

Qatar

'Concern' Over U.S. Threats to Libya Expressed

JN2812114088 Manama WAKH in Arabic 0910 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Doha, 28 Dec (WAKH)—The State of Qatar has expressed its extreme concern over the U.S. threats against Libya.

A responsible source told QNA today that the State of Qatar, which is following with great concern the U.S. media campaign and threats against Libya on the pretext of possessing a chemical weapons plant, believes these threats are unjustified, especially since Libya has officially stressed, through various means, that the U.S. claims are baseless and expressed its readiness to participate in the Paris conference on the nonproliferation of chemical weapons and its commitment to the related international treaties.

The source added that the threats to use force conflict with the current international trend of resorting to dialogue and peaceful means to settle international differences, cause extreme harm to peace initiatives and efforts, and violate international law and UN principles.

United Arab Emirates

Federal National Council Session Inaugurated

JN2712123588 Abu Dhabi Domestic Service in Arabic 0954 GMT 27 Dec 88

["Text" of speech by President Shaykh Zayid ibn Sultan Al Nuhayyan on the opening of the second ordinary session of the seventh legislative term of the Federal National Council on 27 December, read on his behalf by Labor and Social Affairs Minister Khalifah Muhammad al-Rumi—recorded]

[Text] Brothers, chairman, and members of the Federal National Council: May God's peace and blessings be upon you. In the name of God, we today open the new session of your esteemed Council in its second ordinary session of the seventh legislative term.

On this occasion, in my own name and on behalf of my brothers, the members of the UAE Supreme Council, it pleases me to express to you our extreme appreciation for and pride in the role played by this Council during the past year in terms of sincere expression of our people's aspirations on this land for building a bright future for our dear homeland permeated by tranquility, security, and progress.

Brothers, your Council is being held today 17 years after the establishment of our young state. These years were full of gains and achievements in all fields, thus occupying a prominent position among nations, abiding by the values of its true religion, and deriving the principles of its good march from the deep-rooted history of its Arab nation.

This unionist experiment, which was achieved through God's help and will and which is still progressing, constitutes a success that refutes the stands of those who cast doubts on the possibility of achieving the unity of the Arab homeland.

We beseech God Almighty to grant success to this union in a manner that would achieve security and stability. We spare no effort to reinforce the entity of this union, to entrench its pillars, and to safeguard it, stressing that our national unity is an essential element to achieve security, stability, and prosperity for all of us.

Our major objective is to secure an honorable life for the citizens, especially since they are the true wealth of this homeland's present and future. To achieve this objective, the state has provided its sons with all means and resources.

In this regard, the state's educational policy was based on a genuine principle in our Constitution; namely, that science is a basic factor for the progress of the society.

The state has also derived its principles from the values of our true Islamic religion and the deep-rooted heritage of our grandfathers.

It has established schools, scientific institutes, and religious and educational institutions. The UAE University has provided higher studies in all fields of science and knowledge to meet the country's needs in all fields to cope with the social and economic changes in our contemporary world.

The government has also provided all health services and built modern hospitals and clinics equipped with the most sophisticated equipment.

The government has also expanded various social institutions such as rehabilitation centers, centers for the handicapped and welfare units for children and the elderly.

It has opened various social centers aimed at promoting the level of awareness of the family, which is the nucleus of society, regarding economic, social, and health fields.

The state has given appropriate attention to women given that they constitute the basic pillar of families. Women have been given appropriate education, including higher education, and were given job opportunities in various sectors.

Women's societies have played a major role in encouraging and educating women to play their role fully in raising their children, educating them, and teaching them religious values.

Brothers, the founding of the GCC was a response to historical, social, economic, and political realities and to enable Arab citizens in the Gulf to live freely, peacefully, and with dignity.

The GCC was also founded to reflect the citizens' hopes and aspirations. Having become an established reality, the GCC is moving steadily and wisely toward achieving closer cooperation among the member states in all political, economic, security, military, and cultural fields.

Last Thursday, the ninth summit was concluded in fraternal Bahrain. In this summit, the GCC leaders' wisdom and insight toward issues of interest to the people of the area was manifested.

The summit sought an economic integration connecting the joint interests of the people of the GCC states. The GCC also affirmed adherence to seeking Arab solidarity and to supporting all Arab issues.

Our feeling of responsibility toward our homeland's security and stability and its connection with security and stability in the Gulf prompted us to support all sincere efforts to halt the Iraq-Iran war, which was a major tragedy exhausting all human and military resources of the two brotherly Muslim peoples, and also in view of the ensuing dangers of this war which posed a threat to the security of the entire region.

We thank God the two countries have agreed to heed the voice of reason by accepting UN Security Council Resolution No 598. We urge both parties to be fully committed to the implementation of this resolution to spare the region the woes of war and destruction and to be able to enjoy peace, tolerance, and coexistence under the principles of our true religion.

We call on all peace-loving states and forces to contribute toward a just, durable peace which satisfies both sides.

Brothers, as a part of the Arab nation, the UAE is comitted toward its pan-Arab responsibilities. Therefore, it continues efforts to effect a unified Arab position and achieve solidarity among brothers.

Hence the UAE stand supporting the Palestinian people's national legitimate rights; continued support for the PLO, the Palestinan people's sole, legitimate representative; and support and recognition of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. This truly reflects the UAE's pan-Arab commitment toward the Palestine question.

At the same time, we greet the blessed uprising waged valiantly and courageously by the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We also support the convening of an international conference for peace within the framework of the United Nations and with the participation of the UN Security Council permanent member states and all concerned parties to find a just and durable peaceful solution. Out of our concern for fraternal Lebanon's unity and Arabism and to help it overcome its crisis, we have called for an emergency Arab summit to consult on a solution that would help Lebanon surmount its tribulation and preserve its national territorial integrity, political independence, and Arab affiliation.

We also hail the efforts that are being exerted to return fraternal Egypt to the Arab fold.

Egypt, with its important status and political and humanitarian weight, must assume its Arab responsibilities and play its role within the framework of the Arab League.

Brothers, the strong bonds linking us to the fraternal Islamic states—bonds which are based on one common faith, Islam, according to God's words: the faithful are brethren—call upon us to work sincerely toward uniting Muslims and supporting their causes by taking part in Islamic conferences and organizations as well as international forums.

The UAE has spared no effort in supporting and strengthening Islamic organizations, participating in them, and assisting and supporting Islamic states.

On the international level, we have adopted the policy of nonalignment, which is based on justice and equality among all nations. We also denounced racial discrimination, supported national liberation movements against colonialism, and called for the establishment of fair and equal economic relations between the industrial and developing states.

Brother members of the Federal National Council, entrenching the pillars of the federation, consolidating its stability, and achieving its progress in all fields is a national and pan-Arab responsibility which is asserted by national bonds and common Arab destiny and dictated by the various international circumstances and the challenges we are facing.

Therefore, it behooves us all—leaders, governments, and peoples—to rise to the level of this responsibility. The federal experiment calls for more cohesion, solidarity, and devotion for the sake of continuing this process of wellbeing and building a strong bright future in which the sons of the homeland can enjoy stability, prosperity, progress, security, and might while our flags wave high over our country.

We ask God Almighty to give us inspiration, guide our steps, and help us all in performing our national responsibilities so we can set a good example of hard work for the sake of the homeland.

Saddam Husayn Confers With PLO's 'Arafat

JN2612134088 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1154 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Baghdad, 26 Dec (INA)—President Saddam Husayn received here today PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir 'Arafat and PLO Executive Committee members in Baghdad.

'Arafat and the Executive Committee members expressed profound congratulations to the president and the Iraqi people on the victory which safeguards the Arab homeland's eastern flank, protects the Arab nation, and consolidates pan-Arab security.

They stressed the relationship between this historic victory and the Palestinian struggle and its important achievements on the level of the valiant uprising inside the occupied territory and on the political scene.

They also expressed appreciation for Iraq's support for the Palestinian people's just and heroic struggle and for the Palestine question.

President Saddam Husayn expressed thanks and appreciation to the Executive Committee chairman and members for their sincere sentiments and support for the struggle of their brothers in Iraq—support which is deeply appreciated by the Iraqi people and the Iraqi leadership.

During the meeting, Palestine question developments were discussed. The president affirmed that the brave decisions adopted by the Palestinian leadership stem from a strong position in view of the continuation of the valiant uprising in the occupied territory and its practical assertion of the Palestinian Arab people's ability to resist the occupation and to inflict material and moral losses on the occupiers. He also affirmed that these decisions came amid political circumstances appropriate for the Palestine question.

The PLO Executive Committee chairman and members affirmed that leading these circumstances is Iraq's victory over the Iranian aggression and this victory's positive effects on Arab steadfastness and the Arab people's ability to deal with all challenges.

President Saddam Husayn affirmed the need to maintain the political momentum achieved for the Palestine question and to focus on the strategic course announced by the PLO without being bogged down by details which undermine the cause and lead to differences.

It was agreed that it is necessary to improve the current Arab situation and to exert the required efforts for that, especially convening an Arab summit as soon as possible, to tackle the current Arab situation, and to draw up plans for supporting the Palestinian political course and political achievements realized for the Palestine question.

The meeting was attended by Tariq 'Aziz, deputy prime minister and foreign minister; the president's secretary; and 'Azzam al-Ahmad, director of the PLO office in Baghdad.

'Arafat Lays Foundation Stone for Embassy

JN2712172288 Baghdad Voice of the Masses in Arabic 1600 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Excerpts] Baghdad today witnessed the laying of the foundation stone of the State of Palestine's embassy in Iraq.

PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir 'Arafat laid the embassy's corner stone in a major ceremony attended by Tariq 'Aziz, deputy prime minister and foreign minister; Sa'dun Shakir, RCC member; Khalid 'Abd al-Mun'im Rashid, mayor of Baghdad; a number of PLO Executive Committee members; heads of Arab diplomatic missions; and the USSR ambassador in Baghdad. [Passage omitted]

In an address at the ceremony, Tariq 'Aziz said: This simple celebration is great in its meaning as the Palestinian people, through their valiant uprising, strong will, and free independent decisionmaking, succeeded in declaring the State of Palestine and obtaining international recognition of it.

He added: This is the first step and fruit toward the achievement of the legitimate aims of the Palestinian people; namely, the establishment of their free independent national entity on the land of Palestine. It is also a first fruit of the correct and effective Arab solidarity that is removed from trusteeship and domination. [passage omitted]

'Azzam al-Ahmad, Palestinian ambassador to Iraq, said in an address at the ceremony that the embrace of Iraq and its political leadership, with President Saddam Husayn at its head, of the Palestinian Embassy is a living embodiment of Iraq's honorable stands toward the Palestinian people and their valiant revolution. It is also an emphasis of its firm principled positions on supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people by all means. [passage omitted]

Arab Lawyers Union Chairman on Al-Asad Talks

JN2512124688 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1050 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] Cairo, 25 Dec (INA)—Ahmad al-Khawajah, chairman of the Arab Lawyers Union [ALU], has said that the ALU failed to convince Syria to change its stands on a number of Arab issues—something which would have led to a relaxation in inter-Arab relations.

Al-Khawajah said that an ALU delegation held 7 hours of lengthy talks with Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad without achieving any tangible results. Hafiz al-Asad remained determined to continue pursuing his stand on the Lebanese issue and to pursue a hostile stand against Iraq.

The ALU chairman affirmed that the head of the Syrian regime is determined to pursue his stands which are in harmony with Iranian positions despite the disclosures which have surfaced regarding the cooperation the Khomeyni regime maintains with and the support it receives from the Zionist entity.

Al-Khawajah added that the delegation left with the impression that Syria's stands regarding the Lebanese issue are based on rejection of withdrawal, continuation of the crisis and factional infighting, and obstruction of the work of the Lebanese constitutional institutions on the pretext of the need to effect political reform and cancel sectarianism.

He added that the delegation discussed these issues with Hafiz al-Asad. However, he went on to say that Syria tackles the Lebanese political situation according to sectarian considerations.

Ahmad al-Khawajah indicated that the ALU delegation discussed with Hafiz al-Asad the issue of the human rights violations being perpetrated in Syria and against the Palestinians and Lebanese on Lebanese territory and said that Al-Asad even failed to honor the pledge he gave to the ALU chairman 2 years ago when he promised to release the imprisoned Syrian lawyers, including Salim 'Aqil, the doyen of Aleppo lawyers, who has been detained for 7 years without trial and against whom no specific charges have been brought.

The ALU chairman pointed out that the Syrian ruler was extremely annoyed by the delegation's clarity and frankness and that he voiced regret over having received the delegation and also over having held a dialogue with it.

AL-THAWRAH Cited on Criticism of Syria

JN2812111588 Baghdad INA in English 1040 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Baghdad, Dec.28, INA—An article published by the Iraqi daily AL-THAWRAH attacked the Syrian Government and said that its policy is based on enmity and harming the Arab nation.

The article said that the bases of the Syrian policy depend on the shameful alliance with the Zionism and international imperialism and adopting the trend that serves their plans against the Arab nation.

The daily said that Syria had turned into a focus of conspiracy and the government was turned into a means of oppressing the people and implementing the dirty targets and criminal aims against the Arab nations and its vital interests and causes.

The Iraqi daily added that the bases of the Syrian regime include getting Syria out of the Arab environment, enmity against the Palestinian revolution and seeking to blow up its question in terms of land, people and history as well as enmity against Iraq, its revolution and achievements and the continuation of damaging Lebanon and interfering in its internal affairs so as to divide and to share it with the Zionists and the continuation of strategic alliance with the Iranian regime, the enemy of the arab nation.

The article warned Hafiz al-Asad saying that the end of treason and traitors will certainly be shameful.

Arab Monetary Fund Grants $112 Million Loan

JN2712165488 Manama WAKH in English 1520 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Abu Dhabi, Dec 27 (GNA)—The Arab Monetary Fund Monday lent Iraq 27.7 million accounting dinars (112 million dollars).

Chairman Dr 'Abdallah al-Quwayz and Iraqi Ambassador Taha Rajab 'Urayni signed the agreement, which brings to 524 million dollars the loan value extended by the pan Arab fund to Iraq.

It also raises to 1.9 billion dollars the value of loans extended by the Abu Dhabi-based fund to member states since it was set up in 1976.

Further on Possible Shamir-Mubarak Meeting

Shamir: No 'Preconditions'

TA2712125388 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1230 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] The visit of Egyptian President Husni Mubarak should be held without preconditions, said Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir today in reaction to Mubarak's statement that Israel's consent to an international conference is a condition for the visit:

[Begin recording] [Shamir] I will be very happy to receive him. In our routine contacts with Egypt we will discuss ways to execute that visit, which I sincerely hope will take place. I believe such visits should normally be planned carefully, far from the limelight, and without any preconditions.

[Unidentified correspondent] Do you think it likely that such a visit will be held soon?

[Shamir] We have already had visits by an Egyptian president to Israel. [end recording]

Our correspondent notes that the prime minister added that he will divulge the specifics of his new peace plan soon.

Responding to a question on whether Shim'on Peres, the vice prime minister and finance minister, is updating Mr Shamir on the details of the new economic program, Shamir said: I know more or less what it entails.

Ghali Explains Mubarak's Stand

TA2812093688 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 28 Dec 88 p 7

[Interview with Dr Butrus Ghali, Egyptian minister of state for foreign affairs, by Smadar Peri on 27 December; place not given]

[Text] Dr Butrus Ghali, Egyptian minister of state for foreign affairs, has stated that if Israel refuses to recognize the PLO and conduct direct talks with the organization within the framework of an international conference, President Mubarak will not come to Israel.

"There is now no reason for Israel not to recognize the PLO," the Egyptian minister said last night in a conversation with YEDI'OT AHARONOT. "The PLO recognized Israel after Egypt exerted pressure on it, and it is now Israel's turn to recognize the PLO."

[Peri] Is President Mubarak's visit to Israel conditional on our agreement to recognize the PLO?

[Ghali] I do not like the word "conditional," but yes; it must be made clear that if Israel is not prepared to take one step forward and become involved in the newly-created situation, Mubarak will not come.

[Peri] Mubarak's announcement about his visit to Israel is a pleasant surprise. Was it a chance remark or was it intentional?

[Ghali] I do not know, as far as the timing is concerned. President Mubarak expressed his opinion in clear language, but it appears that matters are not clear to you in Israel: a trip to Israel is not the problem.

We have been calling on you to solve the Palestinian problem since December 1987. We have been trying to push forward, to advance. And what has been happening with you? Nothing.

[Peri] You state that Mubarak will not come if Israel does not recognize the PLO, but Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir declared very clearly that Israel will never sit at the same negotiating table with the PLO.

[Ghali] So what. In the past he opposed the signing of the peace accords. There was opposition to the withdrawal from Sinai, but there was a withdrawal, Yamit was evacuated, and the peace accords were signed.

It is not wise to stick to the position of always saying "no." One should bargain, look around, analyze the political situation, and advance.

[Peri] We developed great expectations of finally seeing Mubarak. Did we go too far?

[Ghali] I do not know about your expectations....That is your problem.

[Peri] What if Shamir reiterates: No PLO?

[Ghali] In that case, Mubarak will not go.

[Peri] What will happen?

[Ghali] There are no secrets: we will enter a deadlock.

[Peri] The prime minister also opposes an international conference, but he is proposing the "international auspices" of the United States and the USSR as an alternative. What is Egypt's position?

[Ghali] On the matter of the superpowers as an alternative, I do not know.

[Peri] Listening to you I understand that we can roll up the red carpet and store away the Egyptian flags.

[Ghali] No comment. Let us say that everything depends on you. I still believe and hope that Israel will change its mind sooner or later.

[Peri] In fact, President Mubarak said on Monday that he will not come if Israel will impose preconditions, but it is he who is dictating the terms.

[Ghali] The picture is not at all complicated: Egypt pressured the PLO to recognize Israel, to adopt Resolutions 242 and 338, and to denounce terror. The PLO did it; what about you?

Israel and the PLO must sit around the same table and talk to each other. You may not reach an agreement and differences may surface, but this must take place. You cannot continue to avoid the issue.

Jerusalem Reacts 'With Caution'

TA2712192788 Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew 1700 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Jerusalem is reacting with caution to the statement made by Butrus Ghali, Egyptian minister of state for foreign affairs, that President Mubarak would consider a visit to Israel only if the latter gave its consent in advance to open a dialogue with the PLO.

Avi Pazner, the prime minister's adviser, said that clarifications with Cairo concerning the visit are continuing. Foreign Minister Arens' spokesman said that everything pertaining to a possible visit by Mubarak would be dealt with through the bilateral official channels.

Our political correspondent 'Oded Ben-'Ami points out that Egyptian Ambassador Basyuni yesterday conferred with Minister Arens and with Yosi Ben-Aharon, director general of the Prime Minister's Office. Ambassador Shim'on Shamir has been holding contacts with Egyptian Government officials in Cairo.

Arens Given Message

TA2712142688 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 27 Dec 88 pp 1, 12

[Report by diplomatic correspondent Menahem Shalev and news agencies]

[Excerpts] "The whole world is waiting for Mr. Shamir's initiative," Egyptian Ambassador Muhammad Basyuni said last night, reiterating that President Husni Mubarak would visit Israel only if Shamir offered "something new." [passage omitted]

Basyuni met yesterday with Foreign Minister Moshe Arens and submitted a message from Arens's Egyptian counterpart Ismat 'Abd al-Majid. In his message, 'Abd al-Majid congratulated Arens on his appointment and stressed Egypt's wish to propel the peace process forward. Arens is expected to reply to the message today.

Despite Mubarak's second offer in as many days to come to Israel, sources here noted that the Egyptian president linked his visit to progress on the convention of an international conference.

Mubarak, the sources said, is signalling his wish to now play his "Israeli card" in the wake of the opening of the U.S.-PLO dialogue and in order to further enhance his stature in the Arab world. But in essence, they added, he has not altered his longstanding preconditions for a summit meeting with Shamir.

The sources added, however, that a Shamir proposal for superpower auspices could well arouse the interest of the Soviets—rather than the Egyptians—who have recently indicated their willingness to part with the international conference format as long as they are granted a foothold in Middle East peacemaking.

It should be noted that Shamir has attached seven preconditions, including resumption of full diplomatic relations, to Soviet participation in peace talks. [passage omitted]

Basyuni told THE JERUSALEM POST that there would be no point to a visit by Mubarak if "there is nothing new, or if Shamir repeats the same offer."

He reiterated Egypt's position that the international conference is "the only available means for tackling the issue of peace" and that Israel must talk to the PLO, "the only representative of the Palestinian people."

Nonetheless, he added, the whole world is waiting for Shamir's initiative, and Egypt would be willing to move forward based on "any initiative which is acceptable to all the sides."

Soviets Ready To Assist in Dialogue With PLO

TA2712123488 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 27 Dec 88 p 2

["Exclusive" report by correspondent in Egypt Yoram Hamizrahi]

[Excerpt] Cairo—Soviet Ambassador to Egypt Gennadiy Zhuravlev said in Cairo yesterday that the Soviet Union is ready to help establish a dialogue between Israel and the PLO. He noted that "various options exist, all of which should be examined."

The ambassador, who has 25 years of experience in various Soviet Foreign Ministry positions in the Middle East, told the HA'ARETZ correspondent that the Soviet Union is implementing "a policy of new thinking" which develops different courses of action that go beyond ideological barriers.

"Mr Yitzhaq Shamir has a place at the negotiating table, and everyone is expecting clarifications on the subject of Israel's policy. If these problems are settled, it will also be possible to resume diplomatic relations." The ambassador stressed "the need for a dialogue to lead to the convening of a conference that will solve all the problems of the region."

Replying to reporters, the Soviet ambassador said that no precise date has been set for Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's tour of the region and that "diplomatic-level contacts are being held on this issue."

In a conversation with the HA'ARETZ correspondent in Cairo, the ambassador said that soon "the Soviet Union and the United States will launch talks on the subject of armament in the Middle East."

He added that the Soviet policy on peace and dialogue goes beyond ideological barriers. [passage omitted]

Palestinians Discuss 'Cease-Fire,' Elections

TA2812115588 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 28 Dec 88 pp 1, 6

[Report by political correspondent 'Aqiva Eldar]

[Excerpt] Palestinian figures who are considered leaders in the West Bank have recently expressed readiness for a "cease-fire" in the intifadah [uprising], if Israel stops detaining and deporting leaders from the territories and makes some gestures toward the Palestinians, such as releasing several administrative detainees.

In contacts with U.S. diplomats, these elements from the territories have said that following the cease-fire, they would cooperate with the Israeli decision to hold municipal elections in the West Bank, with the quiet understanding that the elected mayors would serve as spokesmen for the Palestinians in political contacts with Israel.

In this way the PLO leadership's demand for control of the Palestinian representation and of the right to invite representatives from the territories to join the delegation could be bypassed.

The Americans are also examining the possibility of returning to the territories some of the deported Palestinian leaders who, according to the U.S. view, constitute the true leadership of the residents of the territories and of allowing them to participate in the elections. Israel has so far rejected all such appeals. [passage omitted]

Moshe Arens on 'Peril' of Palestinian State

TA2512174388 Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew 1700 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] Foreign Minister Moshe Arens said tonight that Israel is now facing an offensive aimed at drawing us back to the 1967 borders and establishing a Palestinian state.

Our immediate goal, said the foreign minister, is to thwart that peril and to inform the international community about it, stating plainly that it presents a grave danger to Israel's survival. At the same time, we must formulate stands and initiatives supporting Israel's interests.

Our political affairs correspondent 'Oded Ben-'Ami reports that the foreign minister's remarks were made tonight during the first working session of his ministry's directors.

Rabin: 'Patience' Will Cause More Change in PLO

TA2712170388 Tel Aviv 'AL HAMISHMAR in Hebrew 27 Dec 88 p 3

[Report by Betzal'el 'Amiqam]

[Excerpt] "The change in the PLO's position as reflected in 'Arafat's declarations came about due to the pressure exerted by the inhabitants of the territories, who have been struggling with the Israeli authorities on one hand and suffering a great deal on the other. They informed 'Arafat that they could attain nothing else by force, and urged him to give in."

Addressing the Knesset yesterday, Defense Minister Yitzhaq Rabin went on to say he believed that a little bit more patience would lead to additional changes in the PLO's approach.

"There is no more talk about a civil uprising. The Arabs know there is no such thing, and realize they cannot pull one off," Rabin said.

He added: "We will use force in the face of violence, however long it may last. There is no other choice; this is a tough confrontation in a context and conditions we have never experienced before." [passage omitted]

Poll Shows Majority Favors Talks With PLO

TA2312120588 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 23 Dec 88 p 1

[Dahaf Institute poll]

[Text] Fifty-four percent of the public supports negotiations with the PLO on condition that keeps its promise and stops terrorist activities. Forty-four percent object to holding negotiations with the PLO even if it stops engaging in terrorism.

This is the finding of a public opinion poll conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week and including 653 people who were interviewed in private, based on a representative sample of the Jewish population.

The pollsters note that a comparison with findings of similar polls conducted in the past shows a significant increase in the number of those favoring negotiations with the PLO.

Question: Based on 'Arafat's declaration in Geneva, and on the condition that it ceases terrorist activities, are you for or against negotiating with the PLO?

—Definitely for: 21 percent.

—For: 33 percent.

—Definitely against: 24 percent.

—Against: 20 percent.

—No opinion: 2 percent.

Shamir Meets With U.S. Senator Larry Pressler

TA2312124688 Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew 1200 GMT 23 Dec 88

[Text] Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir says that Middle East peace will not be obtained through U.S. support for the PLO. Mr Shamir made these remarks in a conversation with Senator Larry Pressler, a South Dakota Republican. Mr Shamir added that Israel's relations with the United States are excellent despite the disagreement over Washington's talks with the PLO.

The Palestinian issue, the prime minister said, is only one of many problems for the United States; for us, however, the PLO is the main problem. Mr Shamir believes that the United States can bring Israel and its neighbors to the negotiating table, because it has the trust of all sides.

Our political correspondent 'Oded Ben-'Ami reports that Senator Pressler expressed amazement over the U.S. recognition of the PLO and its decision to begin talking to the organization.

Thatcher Invites Shamir To 'Talk Over Issues'

TA2812085888 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 28 Dec 88 p 12

[Report by diplomatic correspondent Menahem Shalev]

[Text] In an apparent acknowledgement of the new political realities here, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has invited Prime Minister Shamir to visit London in the near future.

In a letter received yesterday, Thatcher expressed "hope that you will be able to find an opportunity to visit London so that we can talk over issues of concern to us."

Shamir is expected to respond favourably to Thatcher's invitation. Sources in the Prime Minister's Office expressed "pleasant surprise" at the invitation. Relations between Shamir and Britain—and Thatcher in particular—have been cool, especially in the wake of the British prime minister's open support for then-foreign minister Peres's 1987 London Agreement with Jordan's King Husayn.

Britain pointedly refrained from inviting Shamir for a visit after he became premier in 1986. In her letter, Thatcher wrote. "I offer you my congratulations on the formation of a new government. Many difficult problems lie ahead, but Israel has never shirked challenges. Indeed, your country's history is a proud record of meeting and overcoming even the most formidable of them.

"No challenge is greater than making peace, and I hope that Israel's immense talents and ingenuity will be directed, under your leadership to that objective.

"I look forward to continued close and friendly contacts between our two countries and hope you will be able to find an opportunity to visit London so that we can talk over issues of concern to us."

Ties With Kenya Renewed; Nigeria, India Targeted

TA2512085988 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0600 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] Late last week Kenya announced the resumption of official ties with Israel. Diplomatic relations were severed 15 years ago after the Yom Kippur war. After reestablishing relations with Kenya, Jerusalem expects diplomatic relations to be reestablished with Nigeria, the largest black African country.

In another development, a senior Israeli official—the assistant Foreign Ministry director general for Africa and Asia affairs—will depart for political talks in India next week. Yes, India is another target. Our political correspondent 'Oz Frankel reports:

[Begin recording] A while ago, a senior official representing the Kenyan Defense Ministry [as heard] visited Israel secretly. He held a series of meetings in Jerusalem and conferred with Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir, among others.

Subsequently, David Kimche, the former Foreign Ministry director general, flew to Kenya. Kimche, now a businessman, bore the title of special ambassador. Late last week he was summoned to the presidential palace where he was officially informed of the decision to renew full diplomatic ties with Israel.

Since Israel launched its intensive campaign to return to the black continent in the early 1980's, Foreign Ministry officials have targeted two major goals: Kenya and Nigeria, possibly the two most important countries in Africa.

Even in the years during which there were no formal relations, extensive ties were nevertheless maintained with both countries. In Nigeria, Israel carried out dynamic economic activity. There was also cooperation on other delicate issues with Kenya.

Israel maintains a permanent legation in Nairobi, headed by [former police inspector general] Arye Ivtzan, who also holds the title of ambassador accredited to the UN institutions located in Kenya.

Throughout the years, Yitzhaq Shamir conferred several times with President Daniel arap Moi. In his travels to Africa as foreign minister and prime minister his aircraft would make a stopover in Nairobi, ostensibly only for refueling purposes.

Jerusalem is now anticipating the resumption of ties with Nigeria and other African countries. The Nigerians have often said that if Kenya takes the first step, they will follow suit.

Incidentally, it seems that the countries that want to tighten their relations with Israel now have another convenient excuse to do so: the PLO's Algiers conference. No doubt, in the future as well, we will hear of Third World countries establishing ties simultaneously with Israel and the Palestinian state whose existence is in theory only.

At the same time, let us report on another interesting development related to Israel's foreign relations. Yosef Hadas, assistant Foreign Ministry director general, will depart for New Delhi, the capital of India, next week. He is scheduled to hold talks with his counterparts in the Indian External Affairs Ministry.

This will be the first visit by a senior Israeli official to India, and it will be an important one. It follows the decision made by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi last summer to raise the level of Israel's diplomatic representation in his country. [end recording]

[Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew on December 25 carries a front-page report by political correspondent 'Aqiva Eldar on Hadas' invitation to India, adding that "in early July, following pressure from the United States and Jewish organizations, India raised the level of Israel's representation from deputy consul—which prevailed since 1982—to consul, and expanded his jurisdiction. Israel's consul in India is 'Amos Radian.

Recently India has expressed interest in Israeli energy technology. Minister Moshe Shahal met with the Indian prime minister's adviser on energy affairs, who arrived in Israel for an international convention, on the matter. In a message the Indian official later sent to Minister Shahal, he noted that India is interested in launching practical contacts for cooperation in various energy areas.

A month ago, an Israeli industrialists delegation participated in an international conference in Bombay where a cooperation agreement with the Industrialists Association was signed. India has recently eased the process of issuing visas to Israeli businessmen through the Indian consulate in Milan. It has shown a growing interest in attracting Israeli economic elements. At the same time, Jerusalem does not anticipate a resumption of diplomatic relations with India soon."]

Shekel Devalued 5 Percent; Further Steps Possible

TA2712131688 Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew 1300 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] The shekel was devalued by 5 percent an hour ago. The decision on the devaluation was made by Finance Minister Shim'on Peres and Prof Mikha'el Bruno, governor of the Bank of Israel. They decided to take that measure now because the banks reported increased demand and purchase of foreign currency.

Our economic affairs correspondent Me'ir Einstein reports that now, after the devaluation, the official rate of exchange for $1 is 1.686 shekels. The new rate of the currency basket is 1.8038 shekels. Our correspondent emphasizes that this devaluation does not necessarily preclude another change in the rate of exchange soon.

Minister Peres, who is continuing to hold consultations toward the consolidation of a new economic program, will confer with economists and Histadrut officials this afternoon.

Central Bank Governor Proposes Economic Plan

TA2612120688 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 26 Dec 88 p 1

[From a report by Avi Temkin and Jeff Black: "The Bruno Plan"]

[Text] The government should take immediate steps to implement a comprehensive economic plan to touch every sector of the economy, Bank of Israel Governor Mikha'el Bruno said yesterday.

At a meeting of the Sapir Forum on Economic Policy, Bruno outlined the main points of the plan.

—Slash NIS [New Israeli Shekels] 1 billion from the budget. The government deficit should be nil.

—The economy will grow only by 2 per cent in 1989, but later, economic growth will pick up and reach 5 per cent per year. Inflation levels should be brought down rapidly to European levels.

—Both government outlay and taxes should be reduced by 1 per cent of Gross Domestic Product each year.

—The balanced budget should enable the government to reduce long term interest. There should be no involvement of the government in the capital market.

—The Minimum Wage Bill should be amended: a special committee should be set up which will determine its level.

—The cost-of-living allowance system must be drastically reformed. Real wages must drop. Drastic changes should be implemented in the labour market.

—Several unconfirmed reports have stated that the central bank favours a 15 per cent devaluation.

Industrial Production Statistics Show Decline
TA2812122588 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 28 Dec 88 p 8

[Report by Judy Maltz]

[Text] Industrial production fell 3.5 percent in the first nine months of the year, compared with the same period last year, while industrial exports (excluding diamonds) rose 3 percent during this period.

According to figures released yesterday by the Central Bureau of Statistics, production was down in virtually all industrial sectors, but fell especially sharply in transport (22 percent), textiles (15 percent), and rubber and plastics (10 percent).

More moderate drops were registered in clothing (6 percent), paper products (4 percent), and non-metallic minerals (5 percent). Production was up moderately, however, in the basic metals and food, beverage, and tobacco industries.

In the first nine months of the year, the number of workers employed in industry fell 3 percent (by 9,000), while the number of workdays was down 4 percent. Daily wages per worker in industry rose 23 percent during this period in nominal terms and 6 percent in real terms.

Taking the third quarter of the year alone, industrial production was down 1.5 percent-2 percent, compared with the same period last year. This follows no change whatsoever in the second quarter of the year and a drop of 4 percent in the first quarter.

Those sectors chiefly responsible for the fall in production in the third quarter were transport, chemicals, petrochemicals, and rubber products.

Earlier this week, Industry Ministry Director-General Yoram Blizovsky forecast that industrial production for the entire year would show a drop of 2.2 percent.

Devaluation Marks Return to 'Chaotic Days'
TA2812123088 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 28 Dec 88 pp 1, 12

["Analysis" by Shlomo Ma'oz: "Peres's Costly Blunder"]

[Text] The devaluation of the shekel has turned an economic problem into a crisis. With one nervous blow the economy has been thrown back into the chaotic days of uncertainty and speculation, which eventually led to galloping inflation. By disregarding the advice of professionals at the Treasury and preferring to pay attention to those with vested interests, Shim'on Peres has committed a serious blunder.

The price of his first economic lesson in his new post will be paid first by the public and later by Peres himself. The Israeli public knows from bitter experience that some new finance ministers have made the same mistakes during their first days in office, mistakes which they later regretted.

The public knows that once a new minister is trapped by a dogmatic demand for devaluation as the main way of dealing with all economic diseases, he will probably continue to use the same "medicine" later on, as Yoram Aridor did in the summer of 1983.

In the next few days, therefore, we can expect the public to continue to buy foreign exchange—paying 5 percent more than last week, but still cheap compared with the price it will be expected to pay next month. This 5 percent devaluation seems to be a point of no return, with the way forward fraught with dangers.

The inevitable accelerating inflation, such as occurred during the '70s and '80s, will ultimately require emergency measures to deal with problems that previously had not existed. Peres, as a professional, was supposed to take over the Treasury well-prepared to deal with the economic problems. He was not supposed to conduct public consultations with leaders of all sectors.

He has lost precious time during his first five days in office by allowing the public to dictate policy. The public now knows that it can influence decisions at government level to its own advantage. This illustrates the government's inability to dictate the economy's wage level as planned by the Bank of Israel and the Treasury. The Histadrut's leaders have already made it clear that they will insist on compensation.

Yisra'el Qeysar and Hayim Haberfeld, who have been attacked during the last year for their failure to deal with Hevrat Ha'ovdim [Histadrut holding company] and other Histadrut affiliates, cannot now give up their last stronghold. They cannot give in to a serious cut in the cost-of-living allowance.

Only a month ago employees received a 4.5 percent c.o.l. [cost of living] allowance, which the government has now wiped out in an instant. Instead of listening to bad advice, Peres should have made a public appearance to reassure the people about his policy towards devaluation, the stock exchange and the economy in general.

He should not have allowed the financial markets to ruin his first few days in office. Where were all his many advisers?

Lahd 'Improving;' Doctors Hope for Release 'Soon'
TA2312131988 Tel Aviv DAVAR in Hebrew 23 Dec 88 p 2

[Report by Shim'on Weiss and Ari'ela Re'uveni]

[Text] The Lebanese Communist Party, which is close to the Shi'ite Hizballah organization, yesterday warned that unless General Antoine Lahd's assailant is immediately

released, it will carry out attacks against IDF and South Lebanese Army [SLA] targets as well as against settlements on the northern border.

The spokesmen of the party, which is the most active party in southern Lebanon and to which Lahd's assailant Suhayr Bishara belonged, said that they will take every possible action to free her.

As far as is known, she was jailed in Al-Khiyam prison immediately after the attempted assassination. Spokesmen of the Communist Party have said that the assailant is being held in an Israeli prison and that Israeli investigators have interrogated her. This has not been confirmed by Israeli sources. It should be noted that in southern Lebanon it has already been decided that Gen Lahd will try his assailant once he recovers.

The condition of Gen Antoine Lahd, commander of the SLA, is improving. It has been reported from Rambam Hospital in Haifa, where he is being treated, that he will be discharged soon.

"Gen Lahd can walk now. He talks and sits at the table to have his meals. We hope he will be released soon, although we cannot give a specific date," said Dr Tzvi Ben-Yishay, deputy director of Rambam Hospital.

12 Lebanese Suspects in Car Bomb Affair Released

TA2712170188 Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew 1600 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Twelve inhabitants of the security zone in southern Lebanon who were arrested about 2 months ago after the explosion of the booby-trapped car near Metulla were released from Al-Khiyam Prison today. Our correspondent Hayim Hecht was told that no evidence had been found against them.

Settlers Plan Campaign Against 'Uprising'

TA2712165688 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 27 Dec 88 p 4

[Report by Hayim Broida]

[Text] The leaders of the settlers in Samaria are formulating a long-term plan that will include a widespread information campaign in Israel's cities, as well as protests in which schoolchildren will participate, to put pressure on the defense minister and the prime minister. The purpose of this campaign is to quell and then eliminate the uprising in the territories.

YEDI'OT AHARONOT has received the original document of the "action plan" conceived by the settlers. The document specifies, as in a military operation, the projects necessary to achieve the desired goals. One of the main specifics of the plan is to bring to public notice the feelings of distress shared by Samarian citizens, especially by residents of Jewish settlements who are obliged to drive through Qalqilyah on their way home.

The document discusses the participation of Samarian schoolchildren in demonstrations, raises the idea of symbolic shutdowns of settlements, general strikes in educational institutions, blockages of traffic arteries in Samaria, and the marking of Arab houses from which stones have been thrown.

Curfews, Disturbances Reported in Territories

Curfew in Tulkarm; 2 Wounded

TA2712120088 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1100 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Two inhabitants of the Tulkarm refugee camp were injured by IDF gunfire this morning. A curfew was imposed on the camp.

Our correspondent Moti Amir reports that a curfew was also imposed on Bayt Amin in Samaria and that the security forces are conducting searches for the people who threw firebombs at a house in the neighboring settlement of Sha'are Tiqva yesterday.

[Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew at 1105 GMT on 27 December reports that "the security forces have lifted the curfew from Bayt Amin" and that "villagers have told our correspondent that the IDF detained seven locals for questioning."]

The IDF spokesman has reported that quiet prevails in the Gaza Strip.

Conflicting Counts on Wounded

TA2712194888 Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew 1705 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Excerpt] Arab sources report that approximately 20 residents of the territories were injured today in confrontations with security forces. The IDF today uprooted several olive trees adjacent to the settlement of Sha'are Tiqva that had served as cover for firebomb throwers. Our correspondent Moti Amir reports:

The spokesman for the IDF Southern Command reports that four residents of the Gaza Strip were wounded today during disturbances. Local sources report 15 wounded during confrontations with security forces: 9 in the Al-Nusayrat refugee camp, 4 in Rafah and Khan Yunus, and 2 in the Jabalyah refugee camp and Bani Suhaylah. Security forces lifted the curfew off the Jabalyah refugee camp today.

In Judaea and Samaria military sources report five residents wounded in confrontations with security forces: three in the Tulkarm District, one in the Balatah refugee camp near Nabulus, and one in Al-Birah. [passage omitted]

[Jerusalem Television Service in Hebrew at 1900 GMT on 27 December adds that "a hospital in Ramallah reported this evening that a youngster who had been

wounded in a clash with IDF soldiers in the village of Abu 'Ayn has died of his wounds. Army sources say the youngster was wounded in a confrontation with an IDF unit conducting an operation in the village." The report goes on to quote military sources as saying that "nine people were wounded today in stone-throwing incidents and clashes with IDF troops: five in Samaria and four in Gaza, where an IDF soldier was also wounded. ITIM reports that 11 people were wounded in the Gaza Strip alone."]

Curfew on West Bank Camp

TA2812121188 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1100 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Stones were thrown this morning in a street near Herod's Gate in East Jerusalem. The police used tear gas to disperse stone throwers and detained three of them.

[Jerusalem Domestic Service in English at 1100 GMT on 28 December adds that "curfews were imposed this morning on several Gaza Strip refugee camps and on the Al-Duhayshah camp near Bethlehem. This follows disturbances at Al-Duhayshah this morning and yesterday at the Jabalyah, Al-Shati', Al-Nusayrat, and Shabura camps in Gaza."]

Shamir Orders 'Freeze' on Amos Satellite Project

TA2312131688 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 23 Dec 88 p 1

[Report by Re'uven Pedatzur]

[Excerpt] Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir has vetoed the continued development of and investments in the Israeli communications satellite, Amos. The decision implies a virtual freeze on the project.

Shamir reached this decision after it became apparent that the continuation of the project would have required the government to invest $30 million annually for the next 4 years.

The prime minister's decision on the Amos was needed after Minister of Communications Gad Ya'aqobi failed to get the Defense and Communications Ministries to agree on a joint stand that could be presented for the government's approval.

The Defense Ministry refused to commit itself to an investment in the project after the IDF came out against investing in it using money from the defense budgets. During the early stages of the clarifications, Defense Minister Yitzhaq Rabin hinted that the project could be moved up.

Later, however, the General Staff position became clear: The IDF cannot commit itself in advance to purchase the satellite services. [passage omitted]

Foreign Minister al-Qasim Receives Iraqi Official
JN2612130888 Amman Domestic Service in Arabic 1200 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Marwan al-Qasim, deputy prime minister and foreign minister, received in his office today Wisam al-Zahawi, Iraq's Foreign Ministry first undersecretary. They discussed brotherly ties between Jordan and Iraq and reviewed international developments.

They also talked about the emergency Arab League session set to be held in Tunis next month. They also discussed the Paris conference on banning the use of chemical weapons. The Iraqi ambassador in Amman was present at the meeting.

Al-Rifa'i Confers With PLO Officials
JN2712162688 Amman Domestic Service in Arabic 1600 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Amman—Prime Minister Zayd al-Rifa'i received in his office this afternoon PLO Executive Committee members Mahmud 'Abbas, Yasir 'Abd Rabbuh, and 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Yahya, PLO representative in Amman.

During the meeting the conferees reviewed the latest developments in the Middle East and discussed ways to continue cooperation and coordination between Jordan and the PLO.

Fatah Dissident 'Atallah's Offices Closed
JN2512112488 Manama WAKH in Arabic 1100 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] Amman, 25 Dec (WAKH)—It has been learned that the Jordanian authorities today closed the offices of 'Atallah 'Atallah, also known as Abu al-Za'im, in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

In a report from here, WAM said that despite the fact that no details have been so far made available about the reasons for this closure, observers in the Jordanian capital considered this step as a gesture of goodwill taken by the Jordanian Government toward PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir 'Arafat in this phase.

Abu al-Za'im earlier broke away from the Fatah Movement and appointed himself commander in chief instead of Yasir 'Arafat.

Ground Teams, Air Force Eliminate Locust Swarms
JN2512122888 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 25 Dec 88 p 3

[Excerpt] Amman (PETRA, J.T.)—The Ministry of Agriculture announced Saturday that ground teams assisted by the Royal Jordanian Air Force has eliminated swarms of desert locusts that entered Jordanian territory from Saudi Arabia in the past few days and announced that parties involved in combating the pests were continuing their surveillance to monitor the locust movements.

The announcement was made by Minister of Agriculture Yusuf Hamdan al-Jabr at a meeting with directors of agriculture in various governorates.

The minister said that the best means available for the ministry and the other concerned departments are being employed in the operations.

The minister noted that Jordan was maintaining constant touch with Saudi Arabia and world organisations concerned with fighting the locusts and providing pesticides, vehicles and other necessary equipment for the work of thhe teams in the southeastern regions of the Kingdom.

Al-Jabr said teams have been distributed to a number of regions in accordance with a plan that divides the country into districts to facilitate the work, and ensure support from the public.

The minister praised the work of the teams involved in the locust fighting operations and said that their work will continue until the middle of the coming year, because locusts are expected to come from neighboring countries in the coming spring. [passage omitted]

Further on Alleged Release of French Hostages

Family 'Used' for Media Campaign

NC2612125488 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1215 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Andre Metral, brother-in-law of French hostage Jacqueline Valente who is being held by the Fatah Revolutionary Council, has voiced his belief that the presence of Valente's family in Beirut was used to launch a media and political campaign.

Speaking before boarding a plane that would take him back home, together with Jacqueline's mother Brigitte and Jacqueline's former husband, Metral said: I think that the abductors have really used us.

Children Still at 'Secret Base'

NC2712111888 Paris AFP in English 1105 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Excerpt] Beirut, Dec 27 (AFP)—Two kidnapped French children—whose release by a Palestinian extremist group was announced here late Monday—are still in Lebanon, a spokesman for the group said Tuesday.

Walid Khalid of the Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) told AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE that FRC leader Abu Nidal [Sabri al-Banna] and his deputy, Salim Ahmad, had met Marie-Laure Betille, 7, and her sister Virginie, 6, at a secret base in Lebanon "to say goodbye."

Mr. Khalid late Monday has said the two girls would be arriving in Paris "by plane...within a few hours."

But he refused to disclose their departure point "for security reasons."

"Their time of arrival depends on navigational conditions over the Mediterranean," he added.

The two girls have been held by the FRC for more than a year along with their French mother Jacqueline Valente and five Belgian nationals.

The group said on Christmas Eve that it had decided to release the two children in response to an appeal from Libyan Leader Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi.

The father of the girls, Pascal Betille, their uncle, Andre Metral, and grandmother Brigitte Valente, returned to Paris Monday from Beirut where they had spent Christmas amid hopes that the children would be freed.

On their return to Paris, the family said they knew nothing about the FRC's statement that the girls would be arriving there in the next few hours.

"When we left Beirut, we thought they would not release the little girls. I thought we had been used as pro-Palestinian propaganda," said Mr. Metral before the family was taken to the French Foreign Ministry in Paris. [passage omitted]

Further From Spokesman

NC2712201388 (Clandestine) Radio Free Lebanon in Arabic 1945 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Walid Khalid, an official of the Fatah Revolutionary Council, has stated that the two French children Marie-Laure and Virginie are still at one of the advance bases of his organization in Lebanon.

He refused to disclose the date of their release. After stressing that the issue of the mother Jacqueline is different from that of her two children, he asserted that the release of the two children will take place only through Lebanon and Paris.

Abu Nidal Meets French Children

NC2712133788 (Clandestine) Voice of the Mountain in Arabic to Lebanon 1230 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] While the two French children Marie-Laure and Virginie were expected to arrive in Paris after they had been released by the Fatah Revolutionary Council [FRC], FRC sources declared that Abu Nidal [Sabri al-Banna], FRC Central Committee secretary, and Salim Ahmad, deputy secretary, met the two girls and bid them farewell at a certain secret advanced combat position. They expressed satisfaction with the special security arrangements made to ensure their safe handover to their relatives.

In a statement to FRC cadres and members, Abu Nidal said that response to release the two children constitutes a slap in the face of the true terrorist imperialist killers, foremost of whom is President Reagan. These people and their stooges who incite the people against them by making repeated threats to bombard safe headquarters, installations, and establishments, should bear the responsibility for any anticipated practical reactions against them by struggling forces.

Abu Nidal said: We expect European public opinion to prevent their governments from being carried away by any exaggerations made by Reagan and his administration.

He stressed the importance of understanding humanitarian principles as an indivisible whole. He said that no one can be humane and show compassion for a child here and fail to remember hundreds and thousands of children who are suffering from the severest types of suppression and injustice at the hands of the Zionists.

During their visit to the two French girls, Abu Nidal and Salim Ahmad wished freedom for all the children of the world.

Al-Huss, Libyan Official Exchange Cables

NC2712120588 Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic 1130 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Prime Minister Dr Salim al-Huss today received a cable from 'Umar Mustafa al-Muntasir, secretary of the General People's Committee of the Libyan Jamahiriyah, expressing Libya's solidarity with Lebanon in facing the recent Israeli aggression.

Prime Minister al-Huss replied with a cable in which he thanked Libya for its solidarity with Lebanon and denounced the U.S. veto of the draft resolution condemning Israel for its aggressions against Lebanon. Prime Minister al-Huss also expressed Lebanon's solidarity and sympathy with the Jamahiriyah in the face of U.S. challenges.

Reagan's 'Direct Threats' to Libya Criticized

NC2712113788 Beirut AL-SAFIR in Arabic 23 Dec 88 p 1

[Talal Salman editorial: "Reagan Is Obsessed With Al-Qadhdhafi"]

[Excerpts] Reagan does not want to end his presidency with his image in the world having changed from a "cowboy" whose profession is murder and whose characteristics are viciousness and the violation of laws and international customs to a "man of peace" who has contributed to establishing the basis for a new era in international detente, thanks to Gorbachev's perestroyka.

He came to office with this image and wants to end his two terms in the Presidency of the United States with the same image, leaving for his successor George Bush to enjoy the benefits of what has been achieved in the era of the "superman" and "the strongest of the strong in the universe."

Reagan cannot find an arena to practice his hobby of murder, frivolity, and recklessness, except the Arab arena in general and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriyah and leader of its revolution Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi in particular.

It would be correct to say that Reagan has become obsessed with Al-Qadhdhafi. He has a mania about him. He is possessed by him, and Al-Qadhdhafi's ghost chases him wherever he goes. He wants to settle the outstanding account with him, even on the last day of his term.

For this reason, it would not be something new, strange, or sudden for the outgoing U.S. President to embark on a new foolish action in the coming few days. He has made direct threats against the Jamahiriyah and Al-Qadhdhafi and expressed his intention to bombard Libya once again with his mighty aircraft on the pretext of destroying a factory which produces medicines, which Washington insists is a factory for producing chemical weapons and poison gas. [passage omitted]

It is obvious that Reagan would not have acted with such freedom had it not been for the effective change that has taken place in Soviet policy under "perestroyka," which finds many of its manifestations in openness toward the West and makes the conditions for rapprochement with it—albeit unfair—outweigh the reasons for estrangement, remoteness, and open ideological conflict.

It seems that some of the Arabs, particularly those who still say "no" and demand their right to dignity, freedom, and progress, will have to pay the price for the "yes" which is being echoed in the four corners of the world, this world that is bidding Reagan farewell while its two parts are getting closer to the point of congruence.

Junblatt Makes Changes in PSP Appointments

NC2812105188 (Clandestine) Voice of the Mountain in Arabic to Lebanon 1000 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] The PSP leader has issued the following decisions:

In accordance with the Constitution and with the Central Committee's decision of 22 October 1988 giving the PSP leader special powers for 6 months, the PSP leader has decided to relieve Comrades Robert Karam and Shakir Shayban of their membership in the Party Central Committee.

He has also decided to relieve the following comrades of their membership in the party Central Committee and appoint them as members of the Consultative [al-shura] Committee: George Muhanna, Mansur Jabir, Nabil al-Jirdi, Bahjat Abu al-Hisn, Muhammad Musali, 'Asim Hasan, Jinan Sha'ban, Munir Sfayr, and Naji Yaghi.

The PSP leader has also decided to appoint Comrades Bassam Daw', 'Ali Yunis, 'Abdallah Qansuh, 'Atif al-Qadi, Kulayb Kulayb, Talal Khurays, Shibli al-Masri, Yusuf Khaddaj, Husayn Isma'il, Muhammad 'Awad, 'Ali Dawud, Nasir Zaydan, Nadim Nammur, Sulayman al-Bu'ayni, Kamal Rashid, Bassam Yahya, Hassan al-Bu'ayni, Fadi al-Dimashqi, and Munir al-Sayyid as members of the party's Central Committee.

Communist Party Politburo Member on Events

AU2712164888 Sofia RABOTNICHESKO DELO in Bulgarian 25 Dec 88 p 4

[Interview with Hasan Rifa'i, member of the Politburo of the Lebanese Communist Party Central Committee, by Beirut special correspondent Stefan Arabadzhiev: "Reforms for Uniting, Not Dividing"—date and place not given]

[Excerpts] The recent development of political events in Lebanon is extremely complex. The inhabitants of this small country, so richly endowed by nature, profess different religions, with many variations. [passage omitted]

Hasan Rafa'i, member of the Politburo of the Lebanese Communist Party [LCP] Central Committee, told Stefan Arabadzhiev, our special correspondent in Beirut, about the complex political conditions under which the Lebanese Communists are living and waging their struggle.

[Arabadzhiev] Comrade Rifa'i, what is the position of the LCP regarding the recent events in the country?

[Rifa'i] What happened in our presidential elections would be called a crisis in any country. However, for Lebanon it also represents a risk of the continuation of the civil war, the main reason for which is the existing religious differences.

In the Lebanese state-social system, special privileges are granted to the Maronite bourgeoisie. The events themselves demonstrate that major reforms of this system are needed.

Our party has defined its policy line in this situation. At the last session of the LCP Politburo and Central Committee, it was decided to increase the LCP's role in the activity of the National Democratic Front against the Israeli occupation. In assessing the liberation of the occupied territories as the most important task, we support the unification of all resistance forces, irrespective of their ideological and political convictions.

Another element in our tactics is the unification of the country, based on a single national program. However, this is impossible without certain reforms in the political system, reforms that lead precisely toward unifying, not toward dividing Lebanon. We insist on guarantees that the political forces will have a chance to conduct the reforms and the presidential elections in a democratic manner.

We consider that the present situation in the country cannot continue. The opponents are trying to weaken our front, utilizing the difficulties of the masses of the people. Israel is playing an important role in supporting the Lebanese reactionary forces. For this reason, we are trying, among other things, to assist the Lebanese Army in our regions.

Recently the national forces and Syria managed to exert influence on the government of Salim al-Huss, which, despite opposition, appointed Sami al-Hatib the new commander in chief of the Army. We believe that the reorganization of the Army in our regions serves to prevent confrontation and, at the same time, improves conditions for reaching a political compromise.

In our view, it is especially important to effect economic reforms, which are exceptionally necessary following the escalation of the economic crisis within the country and the rapid fall in the purchasing power of the Lebanese pound. We are also waging a campaign on a number of social issues, connected with food supplies, health care, employment, education, and other matters.

The official organs of power are not managing to meet the real needs, which require speedy action. In this connection, we are trying to mobilize the mass organizations in order to apply pressure from below.

[Arabadzhiev] What is the LCP's position regarding the role of Syria, which is maintaining peace-keeping forces in Lebanon?

[Rifa'i] We view the Syrian presence in Lebanon realistically. Syria is one of the main components of the regional Arab forces against Israel, because of which it also has its role to play in maintaining our national democratic front against the Israeli occupation.

Especially now, when we are beginning to play a more active role against the occupation, the improvement of relations and the achievement of political unity with Syria will considerably expand our capacities for effective actions.

We take account of the fact that we are living at a difficult time. We do not stand in the shadow of the political events and struggles, but are emerging onto the stage and are developing purposeful activity among the broad masses of the people.

Our relations with the other political forces are complex. Our differences do not only spring from the current problems. However, one can see with increasing certainty our future role in creating a serene political situation in Lebanon. [passage omitted]

Fadlallah: Initiatives Represent Foreign Ideas

NC2812074588 (Clandestine) Voice of the Oppressed in Arabic to Lebanon 0630 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah has criticized all the initiatives to resolve the Lebanese crisis. In a press interview, he said that these initiatives represent foreign ideas, particularly American ones.

He added that Arab and European initiatives are undertaken on the basis of a U.S. green light, merely to fill the vacuum, light up the mist, and supply future dreams.

Scholar Fadlallah said he believes that Lebanon is a laboratory for solutions and problems and an international requirement that is used as a pressure factor on the party which refuses to surrender to a solution and a strength factor for the party which accepts the solution. His eminence said he expects more than one Lebanese-Palestinian or inter-Lebanese crisis to occur in order to cook up a peaceful settlement.

Hizballah Said Seeking To Oust Amal From Beirut

NC2412124288 (Clandestine) Radio Free Lebanon in Arabic 1145 GMT 24 Dec 88

[Text] An independent source in West Beirut was quoted today as saying that Hizballah officials had affirmed to him their party's determination to drive the Amal Movement out of Al-Shiyyah at any cost. He noted that the Syrian military presence in the area is one of the most important factors which encourage both Amal and Hizballah to renew fighting.

The same source pointed out that the behavior of the Amal Movement gunmen indicates that they are assured of the backing of the Syrian forces in any new war.

In statements to the AL-NAHAR AL-'ARABI WA AL-DUWALI magazine, the source said that Hizballah officials have warned him not to take seriously any statement or communique on coexistence between the party and the movement in the suburb as long as Amal gunmen prevent Hizballah from launching large-scale attacks against the Israelis in the South.

The magazine refers to continuing clashes between the Amal Movement and Hizballah in the suburb, especially during the evening hours, which constitute a sign of the development of the two sides' future relations.

Palestinian Group Clashes With Israeli Patrol

NC2812114088 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1115 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] According to a source in the Palestine Liberation Front [PLF], a clash occurred between PLF group and an Israeli patrol near Menora at a distance of several dozen meters from the Lebanese-Israeli border this morning.

The source could not supply any information on what happened to the group or the result of the clash in which machineguns, grenades, and rockets were used. The source added that the same group had clashed yesterday afternoon with another Israeli patrol in the same area but was able to withdraw to safety.

Amal Resistance Group Shells Position 26 Dec

NC2712171188 Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic 1630 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] An Amal resistance group used machineguns and rockets to attack the Rshaf position last night, destroying a 12.7-mm machinegun emplacement. In a statement on the attack, the Amal group said that at the same time an Amal artillery unit bombarded the Jabal Humayid position with 120-mm and 82-mm artillery.

The occupation forces immediately shelled the adjacent area and combed it in search of the resistance men, who returned safely to base vowing to Imam Musa al-Sadr and the martyrs that they will continue their resistance.

Meanwhile, Israeli mechanized concentrations have been spotted on the Shaqra road, but there are no details on the reason or objectives.

Amal-Hizballah Fighting Erupts in Southern Suburb

NC2712203888 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 2015 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] The security situation deteriorated at approximately 2150 this evening in the areas of Al-Musharrafiyah, Bi'r al-'Abd, and the outskirts of Al-Shiyah in Beirut's southern suburb, where clashes are taking place between Amal and Hizballah gunmen.

Rockets, artillery, and machineguns are being used in the fighting. The sound of powerful explosions is reverberating in Beirut and its suburbs.

Israeli Aircraft Stage Mock Raids Over Sidon

NC2712181088 Beirut Domestic Service in Arabic 1800 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Hostile Israeli military warplanes have been staging mock raids and reconnaissance sorties over Sidon and adjacent areas since 1910 today. An NNA reporter in Sidon said that the Israeli formations have reached as far as the Al-Awwali area.

Group Claims Attack on Syrian Target in Beirut

NC2712210088 (Clandestine) Radio Free Lebanon in Arabic 2045 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] The 705 unit of the Shaykh Subhi al-Salih forces has announced that it carried out a hand grenade attack on a Syrian occupation forces house near a checkpoint in Tallat al-Khayyat [in West Beirut], close to the water company, this evening. A spokesman for the group said that there were several casualties among the Syrian personnel.

Forces Security Service Releases 15 Detainees

NC2412105988 (Clandestine) Radio Free Lebanon in Arabic 1045 GMT 24 Dec 88

[Text] On the occasion of the festive holiday season, the Lebanese Forces security service has handed 15 detainees in its custody over to their families. They had been arrested on charges of sabotage and spying for those who seek disorder and anarchy in our society.

NPF Reviews Foreign, Domestic Policies

JN2612212188 Damascus Domestic Service in Arabic 1915 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] The National Progressive Front [NPF] Central Command met at 1200 today under Dr Muhammad Zuhayr Mashariqah, vice president and NPF vice chairman.

The Central Command reviewed during this meeting the political state of affairs and developments in the Arab and international arenas. The Central Command noted that this state of affairs and developments confirm the soundness of the political course that Syria is following under President Hafiz al-Asad, a course that stems from a comprehensive pan-Arab concept and a concern for regaining Arab solidarity, given that it is the best course for confronting the fateful challenges, foiling the conspiracies that are being concocted against our pan-Arab existence, and aborting the attempts to weaken the Arab nation's capability to confront the Zionist schemes of expansion and imperialist hegemony.

The NPF Central Command highly valued His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad's wise and courageous policy, given that this policy has proved that it fulfills the objectives of Arab struggle and protects the Arab nation from the perils that engulf it.

The Central Command reviewed the U.S. threats against the Arab Libyan Jamahiriyah and viewed them as being serious warning of an imminent aggression against the fraternal country. While vehemently condemning these threats, which are hostile to the Arab nation, the Central Command calls for forcefully confronting them and for more solidarity with fraternal Libya and its political command.

The Central Command also reviewed the economic state of affairs. It noted that the measures and arrangements that the government has adopted and is adopting are basic and positive steps toward the enhancement of the national economy, the improvement of the citizens' standard of living, and the elimination of the difficulties that obstruct our course of completing the construction of a strong, solid economy—measures and arrangements that have taken place on the instructions and directives of President Hafiz al-Asad, the decisions made by the party, and the directives of the PNF.

These measures and arrangements gave prominence to the agricultural sector on all levels and worked to increase productivity in the industrial sector, including securing the basic components it needs, invigorating its role, and solving problems that arise on this level, reducing waste; achievig self-sufficiency; and speeding up the exploitation of natural resources.

The Central Command praised the government's achievements in all economic fields, particularly balancing revenues and expenditures, the redressing the trade balance, and encouraging exports, all of which positively reflect on the interests of the homeland and its citizens.

'Smoldering Tension' With USSR Reported

JN2712152488 Abu Dhabi AL-ITTIHAD in Arabic 26 Dec 88 p 1

[Text] Damascus, AL-ITTIHAD—Informed diplomatic sources in Damascus have said that a smoldering tension recently began to affect the political relations between the Soviet Union and Syria due to differences in viewpoints over the international conference for peace in the Middle East.

The same sources say that Damascus is facing a Soviet attitude different from that of previous years in which the Soviet leadership is working indirectly with the U.S. Administration to end regional conflicts, including the Middle East.

The sources explain that the preparatory steps for the international conference are likely to be accelerated with Soviet-U.S. sponsorship. The Syrian capital sources believe that the conference will be no more than a meeting between Israel and Arab sides without effective participation by the superpowers.

The same sources say that the existing tension between Moscow and Damascus is silently reacting. However, it is expected that it will develop if the Soviets accept a U.S. formula for the international conference.

Afghanistan

1 Killed, 10 Wounded in Rocket Attack on Kabul

LD2812090688 Kabul BAKHTAR in English 0503 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Kabul, Dec. 27, BAKHTAR—Over 400 surface-to-surface rockets were fired by the extremist groups on Dec. 26 and 27 in the provinces of Herat, Paktia, Ghazni, Faryab and Vardak.

The rockets killed three persons in Herat, three in Ghazni and three in Faryab and wounded a total of 23 persons. Likewise, it demolished a number of residential houses and shops.

Likewise, the extremists fired three rockets in Kabul city today which left behind one killed and 10 wounded. It also caused damage to some residential houses and shops. Today rocketing is first during one and a half month on Kabul city.

AFP Reports Situation

BK2812033588 Hong Kong AFP in English 0311 GMT 28 Dec 88

[By Gilles Bertin]

[Text] Kabul, Dec 28 (AFP)—Mujahidin rebels marked on Tuesday the ninth anniversary of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan by launching rockets on Kabul, killing at least one person and leaving six wounded.

The attacks were the first on the Afghan capital in weeks.

At least six rockets hit Kabul, with one falling downtown. People were seen running in panic and MI-24 combat helicopters took off to fly over the city.

Rebels ringing Kabul rocket the capital every year on December 27 to mark the anniversary of the intervention which followed a coup in the ruling pro-Moscow party.

Explosions were heard overnight not far from the headquarters of KHAD, the Afghan secret service, a resident said.

City residents listen to local and foreign radio reports every day to keep up with rumors running rampant since the recent meeting between Soviet Ambassador Yuliy Vorontsov and former Afghan monarch Zahir Shah.

Most do not hide their desire to see a return by the king, in exile in Rome since 1973. Shopkeepers at the markets, where business has considerably dropped since the war began, are among the king's most ardent supporters.

"We know the rebels are nearby and we have to stop the fighting at all costs. Only the king can do it," said a young money changer.

About 40 kilometers (25 miles) north, hiding in the snowy peaks of Parvan and Laghman, rebels led by Commanders Safihullah and Abdul Haq put pressure on the city.

In Kabul life deteriorates. Vehicles wait in long lines in front of gas stations for up to two hours to buy a few liters of fuel when there is some to be had. In the black market it is easier to get fuel, but it costs twice as much.

Whole parts of the city have been without electricity for the past few weeks and, with the first snows of winter already on the ground, logs have become scarce and expensive.

Residents who want to flee have to wait for a secret service investigation before obtaining a passport. They then try to get a visa from India, the only country still giving visas here, by joining the crowds that form in front of the Indian Embassy here every morning.

Then they have to try to get a ticket on fully-booked flights to New Delhi.

Meanwhile in the city's best hotels, members of the ruling Communist Party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, give what may be their last receptions.

Monday night one of Afghanistan's vice presidents, and several of President Najibullah's ministers and aides, milled in a carefree atmosphere at a soiree with a well-stocked buffet.

Smartly dressed men and women drank vodka and listened to a local star sing the praises of the national reconciliation policy.

But the echo of shots fired by groups of mujahidin and communists fighting in the night outside reminded the guests that the capital was in a state of semi-siege.

Kabol Province Deputies Discuss Reconciliation

LD2612064888 Kabul BAKHTAR in English 0451 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Kabul, Dec. 25, BAKHTAR—Senators and representatives of the House of Commons related to the districts of Kabol Province, chairmen of the National Front and National Reconciliation commissions of Kabol Province held here today a session in which they read out their reports on the duties assigned to them by the previous session.

The previous session which was convened a month ago instructed them to go to their concerned districts and discuss matters related to the solution of environmental problems, ensurance of security in villages and implementation of the national reconciliation policy with the inhabitants of the said districts.

In today's session the deputies and senators while delivering their reports on their one month work promised the honest cooperation of the residents of the districts in regard to the maintenance of peace and security and improvement of the living conditions of the people.

Governor of Kabol, Fazul Ahmad Toghian in his speech hailed the practical works done by the senators and deputies, chairmen of the National Front, National Reconciliation Commissions among masses and gave necessary instructions to the concerned commissions in the field.

Sharq Chairs Council of Ministers Meeting 27 Dec

LD2812092788 Kabul BAKHTAR in English 0500 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Kabul, Dec. 27, BAKHTAR—The periodical session of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Afghanistan [RA] was held under the chairmanship of Dr. Mohammad Hassan Sharq, prime minister of the RA.

The session studied and discussed the draft budget for the coming Afghan year beginning March 20, 1989. The proposals made by the assigned commission of the Council of Ministers was ratified by the session. The Council of Ministers decided that the Ministry of Finance should take into consideration a cut in the expenditure for the state budget in the next Afghan year as compared to the current one.

The Council of Ministers in its today session assigned the Council of Ministers to complete the final draft of the next year budget for the council's consideration fifteen days before the beginning of the new Afghan year.

The proposals of the Ministry of Planning on the delivery of gratis aids to Afghanistan by Bulgaria was studied and decisions were made on its handling. The Council of Ministers thanked Bulgaria on its gratis aid to Afghanistan. A number of other subjects on the agenda were also discussed.

Najibullah Meets With Paktia Chieftains

LD2812092388 Kabul BAKHTAR in English 0454 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Kabul, Dec. 27, BAKHTAR—President of the Republic of Afghanistan, Najibullah had a meeting today with a number of chieftains elders and representatives of eleven tribes of Paktia Province.

During the meeting the Afghan leader spoke on the importance of humanistic objectives of the policy of national reconciliation and attempts of the state of the Republic of Afghanistan for its realisation. Najibullah pinpointed duties of the chieftains of the said tribes for the ensurance of peace in the country as well.

Later, a number of tribal leaders on behalf of their tribes expressed their all-sided support for the recent proposals put forward by President Najibullah and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev for the maintenance of peace and security in their areas; they pledged that they will spare no efforts in the realisation of the policy of national reconciliation.

Military Action Against Rebels in Various Areas

50 'Extremists' Killed

LD2712071588 Kabul BAKHTAR in English 0500 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Kabul, Dec 26 BAKHTAR—Over fifty extremist elements have been killed and tens of others wounded in the last two days as a result of the mopping up operations carried out by the government Armed Forces in Qandahar, Vardak and Kabol Provinces as well as Khowst Grand District.

A large quantity of arms and ammunition were either destroyed or fell at the hands of the armed forces.

According to another report, the armed extremists fired today 39 surface-to-surface rockets on the residential areas of Konduz Province resulting in killing of one women and wounding eight others persons including children and women.

The [words indistinct] among the armed opposition groups. 54 persons attached to the extremist groups were killed and 16 others sustained heavy injuries during the armed clashes took place among them in Kabol and Parvan Provinces.

'Arab Advisers,' Others 'Crushed

LD2712231288 Kabul Domestic Service in Dari 1530 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Since they have high combat preparedness, high morale, and a strong combat spirit our Armed Forces are always ready to foil the conspiracies and treacherous intrigues of the enemies of our compatriots' reconciliation and tranquility, and to crush the extremist warmongering groups.

Quoting an Armed Forces spokesman, the BIA military section reports that as a result of mopping-up operations by Armed Forces units and companies in Daman District and in the surroundings of Qandahar city, dozens of the armed opposition extremists, including two Arab advisers, have been crushed.

One [word indistinct] artillery, one DSHK, one rocket launcher, one weapons and ammunition depot, and one motor vehicle loaded with weapons and ammunition, were eliminated.

Thirteen surface-to-surface missiles, 58 artillery shells, 14 mortar shells, and thousands of rounds of ammunition for various weapons were seized when armed forces personnel carried out a mopping-up operation, with the cooperation of the inhabitants in (Shewan) Village, Bala Boluk District, Farah Province.

As a result of a mopping-up operation the Armed Forces carried out in the area of (Shorakhak) village, Konduz Province, a number of warmongers, attached to Sayaf and Mohammadi groups were killed and injured.

As a result of mopping-up operation by the Armed Forces carried out in Gozar-e Panjsher and Khaneqah regions, Parvan Province, a number of extremists were killed and injured. One rocket launcher and various weapons were seized.

The Armed Forces have carried out mopping- up operations in the surroundings of Shakan Darreh District, Kabol Province; Kowt-e 'Ashrow, Vardak Province; and Zarmal District, Paktia Province. A number of men attached to the extremists groups supported by the United States and Pakistan were killed and injured.

Weapons Depot Discovered

LD2712194188 Kabul Domestic Service in Dari 1600 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] State security officials in Nangarhar Province have discovered and confiscated a weapons and ammunition depot belonging to the Gulbuddin extremist group. The depot was found in (Shamspur) village, Sorkh Rod District, Nangarhar Province.

The BIA correspondent reported from Jalalabad City that 90 anti-personnel mines, 13 rocket launchers, and 8 shells of recoilless gun were seized.

'Extremist' Activity Detailed

LD2712215788 Kabul Domestic Service in Pashto 1530 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] A BIA military correspondent reports that despite all-around efforts by the Republic of Afghanistan and a principled compromise to maintain and strengthen peace in our country, the criminal extremists have not given a positive and constructive reply to the peaceful proposals by the Government of the Republic of Afghanistan.

They have acted against the national interests of the Afghan people and have continued their crimes, y destroying residential areas and public property and martyring our compatriots. On 26 and 27 December the extremists once again committed new crimes. They fired two missiles at block No 35, macrorayon No 3, and at (Bibi Mahru) hill. One person was martyred, and eight others, including six children, were wounded.

As a result of launching heavy weapons against Jalalabad City, one woman was martyred, and another six people were wounded.

Individuals belonging to the extremist armed opposition launched 20 ground-to-ground missiles against Herat City. One compatriot was martyred, and four were wounded. As a result of a missile strike against Herta textile mill, five millworkers were wounded, and four textile machines were destroyed. Two compatriots were martyred and one was wounded when the warmongering extremists launched heavy weapons against (Godzara) district, Herat Province.

The extremist criminals fired 109 heavy shells against Gardeyz city, 178 against Zarmal District, and 40 against Seyyed Karam and (Rud-e Ahmadzai) district as a result of which one child and one woman at Gardeyz city, and one resident of Seyyed Karam District were wounded.

Extremist individuals protected by Pakistan and the United States launched heavy weapons against Konduz City as a result of which one compatriot was martyred and another eight were wounded.

A missile hit the home of Mohammad Musa, a shopkeeper at (Kharkhana Mena), Sector No 2. Two women were wounded, and the house was slightly damaged.

Criminal extremists fired missiles at Meymaneh city, Faryab Province. Three people were martyred, and three were wounded.

Yesterday the extremists fired missiles at Ghazni city as a result three of our compatriots were martyred and another eight were wounded. Extremists also fired 139 ground-to-ground missiles. A number of homes and public property were slightly damaged.

Police Confiscate 180 kg Heroin in Kabul

LD2712220888 Kabul Domestic Service in Dari 1600 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] In its campaign against crime in Kabul the police command confiscated 180 kg of heroin today and disposed of it.

According to a BIA report, the heroin was brought from Pakistan to make Afghan youths dependent on drugs. It had been stored in Khiali Gol's home near (Hodkhel), Kabol Province. The case is under investigation.

Mujahidin Activity in East, West Reported

Nangarhar Commander Killed

BK2812082088 Islamabad Overseas Service in English 0800 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] In Afghanistan, the mujahidin are reported to have captured three more district headquarters in Nangarhar Province during a successful operation last Saturday [24 December].

A district commander and a deputy commander of the Kabul regime troops were killed, while a tank regiment commander along with 25 soldiers were captured by the mujahidin. The mujahidin also seized a huge quantity of arms and ammunition during the operation.

Operations in Farah, Herat

BK2612153088 Islamabad Domestic Service in Urdu 1500 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Reports received from Afghanistan says fierce fighting is continuing between the mujahidin and Kabul regime troops in Shindand area of Farah Province. The Kabul regime troops have suffered heavy losses. Their brigade commander was killed and a senior officer injured.

Meanwhile, the mujahidin attacked military posts near Towr Kham in Herat Province [As heard] and killed 19 Kabul regime troops.

Pakistani 'Violations' Protested to UN Mission

Note No 163

LD2612190388 Kabul Domestic Service in Dari 1600 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] The Afghan Foreign Ministry's office for liaison with the UN Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan reports that today the 163d note of Foreign Ministry on Pakistani violations of the Geneva agreement was handed over to the mission in Kabul.

The note furnished information on 11 cases of violations of the Geneva agreements concerning the dispatch of the arms convoys from Pakistani territory to the extremist groups in Afghanistan. The mission was asked to investigate the violations and report its findings to Afghanistan and to the UN secretary general's representative.

Note No 164

LD2812090588 Kabul BAKHTAR in English 0516 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Kabul, Dec. 27, BAKHTAR—The one hundred sixty fourth notice of the Republic of Afghanistan on flagrant violations by Pakistan of the Geneva Accords was handed over to the United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP) here today.

In the notice strict information on eight instances of Pakistani violations from article first, document number second of the Geneva accords especially dispatching of cararvans of arms and ammunition from the Pakistani territory to the extremist groupings inside Afghanistan are given.

It asks UNGOMAP to assess Pakistani violations and convey results of its findings to the authorities of the Republic of Afghanistan and representative of the UN secretary general.

Canalization Protocol Signed With USSR

LD2812091788 Kabul BAKHTAR in English 0512 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Kabul, Dec. 27, BAKHTAR—A protocol on preliminary project making of water-supply and canalization of Kabul city was concluded here today between Kabul [and] Moscow Municipalities.

According to the protocol signed on the basis of direct cooperation between Kabul and the Afghan side, during one month period, an assigned mixed commission of the concerned enterprises, will consider and assess a plan on water supply and canalization making projects and will deliver their proposals in the field to the Soviet side. On the basis of which Moscow city municipality would adopt decision.

While the signing ceremony was observed by 'Abdul Hakim, Kabul mayor, the protocol from Afghan side was signed by (?Engineer) Mohammad Ibrahim Tokhi, chairman of Kabul Municipality, planning department and from Soviet side by Valeriy Kozanov, engineer-in-chief of Moscow city project-making institute.

Keshtmand, Delegation Depart for Cuba

LD2612192188 Kabul Domestic Service in Dari 1600 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] An Afghan Government and PDPA delegation headed by Sultan 'Ali Keshtmand, secretary and member of the PDPA Central Committee Politburo, left Kabul today to participate in the 30th anniversary of the Cuban revolution.

Members of the delegation are Mir Saheb Karwal, candidate member of the Politburo, secretary of the PDPA Central Committee and chairman of the Defense and Security Commission of the Wolasi Jerga; 'Abdul Majid Sarbuland, ambassador and representative extraordinary of the Republic of Afghanistan in Cuba; 'Abdul Wahed, an official of Internal Affairs Committee of the PDPA Central Committee.

Niyaz Muhammad Mohmand, member of the Politburo and secretary of the PDPA Central Committee; Ghulam Faruq Ya'qubi, member of the Politburo of the PDPA Central Committee and minister of state security; Sediq Rahpo, deputy chairman of international affairs committee of the PDPA Central Committee; and (Yuriy Chebarov), minister plenipotentiary of the Soviet Union Embassy in the Republic of Afghanistan, and minister plenipotentiary of the Cuban Embassy in the Republic of Afghanistan saw off the delegation.

India

Gandhi To Sign Nuclear Pact With Pakistan

BK2812052288 London BBC World Service in English 0215 GMT 28 Dec 88

[From the "Radio Newsreel" program]

[Text] We report now from Delhi on the imminent nuclear agreement between India and Pakistan to be signed when Mr Gandhi visits Islamabad later this week. Newsreel has a dispatch from Subhas Chakraborty in Delhi:

According to highly-placed Indian Government sources, the prime minister's visit to Pakistan will be capped by the signing of an agreement under which the two countries will undertake not to attack each other's nuclear facilities. The agreement incorporates a list of the facilities it covers in both countries. It's the culmination of long negotiations.

The idea in principle was accepted in December 1985 when the late president of Pakistan, General Ziaul Haq, paid a brief visit to Delhi. The agreement marks a breakthrough in the nuclear issue which has given rise to considerable anxiety in India. Many experts, both in India and abroad, have argued that a nonattack agreement would be a very important confidence-building measure.

The recent assurance given by Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto that her government would not encourage Sikh secessionist movements in Punjab has encouraged India to go ahead.

The two prime ministers will also sign two other agreements. One, on avoidance of double taxation and civil aviation services, and the other, to promote cultural exchanges. The two leaders are due to have three meetings during Mr Gandhi's visit to Islamabad which begins on Thursday [29 December]. Subhas Chakraborty reporting from Delhi. We read his dispatch here in the studio.

Commentary on Upcoming Gandhi-Bhutto Meeting

BK2612114688 Delhi General Overseas Service in English 1010 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Commentary by Lalit Kumar Joshi on "Gandhi-Bhutto Meeting, Hope for the Future"]

[Text] India and Pakistan will end 1988 by resuming dialogue at the highest political level when the prime minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, meets his Pakistani counterpart, Ms Benazir Bhutto, while in Islamabad for the SAARC summit.

The outcome of the meeting between Mr Gandhi and Ms Bhutto, both children of prime ministers of the two nations—Mrs Indira Gandhi and Mr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto—who met unnatural ends, is awaited with great hope in the two countries.

This is Mr Gandhi's second visit to Pakistan. He was there earlier this year and went for a few hours to attend the funeral of Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. Mr Gandhi's grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, visited Pakistan in 1960 to sign the Indus River Water Sharing Treaty. Five years later, his successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, made a transit halt in Pakistan.

At the people-to-people level there is great hope that the forthcoming meeting between the two prime ministers will give an impetus to the process of allowing freer movement across the borders. The vital issue of crying halt to the aid from Pakistan to terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir is going to figure prominently in the discussions. Ms Bhutto has recently explicitly stated that she was against the use of ethnic card.

Islamabad's nuclear program, a topic of heated controversy in recent years, will be given considerable attention in the talks between Mr Gandhi and Ms Bhutto. The Pakistan premier is likely to formalize agreement reacting [as received] between late President Ziaul Haq and Mr Gandhi about nonattack on each other's nuclear facilities.

Mr Gandhi, while saying that the issue will be discussed, has stated that while there was no reason to disbelieve Ms Bhutto's assertion that Pakistan was not building nuclear weapons, said at the same time there was information to the contrary [sentence as received].

One of the main reasons for the fresh belief that India and Pakistan could forge a more meaningful relationship based on friendship and cooperation, has been the assertion by both prime ministers that the problems between the two countries could be solved within the framework of the Simla Accord signed by their parents in 1971.

Ms Bhutto, a teenager then, was present at Simla when the accord was reached and has vividly recalled in a recent book these crucial days.

The Simla Accord is an all-pervasive one and provides for settlement of all disputes through bilateral discussions in a peaceful manner. Mr Gandhi's and Ms Bhutto's recent assertions that the talks will help bring about a better understanding between the two neighbors has only strengthened the belief of better times.

Ms Bhutto has rejected a no-war pact with India. India also had never been keen on one. What India had talked about was an all comprehensive peace and friendship treaty.

Yet another reason for having confidence in Ms Bhutto's undoing the friction of the past, is her statement that a government that has the support of its people does not need to divert the attention of its people. An unrepresentative dictatorship has great need of highlighting an external threat, she has said on accord.

The recent release of some Indian fishermen prisoners in Pakistan by the authorities following an amnesty announced by Ms Bhutto has also given fillip to the spirit of good neighborly relations. Ms Bhutto has also said that better relations with India was something independent of better relations with the Soviet Union.

Pakistan's newly elected president, Mr Ghulam Ishaq Khan, has also said that the new Bhutto government would seek good relations with India. Pakistan, he told a joint session of Parliament, will strive for a peaceful and just solution of outstanding problems, including the Kashmir issue, with India. Pakistan will continue its efforts to build good neighborly relations with India on the basis of sovereign equality, respect for each other's territorial integrity, and non-use of force, he said.

Mr Gandhi and Ms Bhutto will have to squeeze time for their bilateral talks. Ms Bhutto, who will be taking over as the SAARC chairperson at the summit, will be very busy with it. Mr Gandhi has pressing engagements waiting at home, including elections in Tamil Nadu, Nagaland and Mizoram in the cards.

Ms Bhutto has said that as a chairperson of the SAARC she looked forward to visiting India. Mr Gandhi as a chairman of the regional grouping in 1986 could not visit the SAARC member states due to pressing engagements at home. But the new year may herald a new beginning in this direction too.

1988 was a watershed in the history of Pakistan as it marked return of multiparty democracy after 11 and ½ years of martial law and military rule. Ms Bhutto, who has a crisis on her hand following the dissolution of the Baluchistan assembly, is sure to run into a number of road blocks, including those of a fledging democracy. But she has the will to overcome them and make her nation prosperous and strong.

Friendship with India and peace on the borders is, thus, the priority. She is sure to not let go this opportunity during her meeting with Mr Gandhi, her country's biggest neighbor.

Government Urged To Set Up Chinese Border Group

BK2712054888 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0240 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] The Congress-I Working Committee has urged the government to ensure early establishment of the joint working group with China on the border issue. At its meeting in New Delhi yesterday, the committee expressed the hope that the proposed group will be able to find a solution to the complex question and keep the border areas free from tension.

The meeting welcomed the prime minister's visit to China and said the visit has given a decisive momentum to the process of renewal and strengthening of India's relations with China.

The Congress-I general secretary, Mr K.N. Singh, who briefed newsmen, said the prime minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, gave an overview of his discussions with the Chinese leaders to the members.

The CPI-M general secretary, Mr E.M.S. Namboodripad, has also hailed the outcome of the prime minister's visit to China. He was talking to newsmen in Trivandrum on the eve of the 13th CPI-M party congress beginning today. About 700 delegates are participating in the congress. Delegates from the Soviet Union and China are also attending.

Violence Continues in Andhra Pradesh Towns

BK2712093488 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0830 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] In Andhra Pradesh, shoot-at-sight orders have been issued in 19 towns—nine in East Godawari, two in Krishna, and eight in Guntur Districts—following large-scale violence in the wake of the murder of the Congress-I legislator, Mr V. Mohanaranga Rao, in Vijayawada yesterday.

In Vijayawada, the curfew has been extended till Thursday [29 December] morning. The Andhra Pradesh government has requisitioned the army as a standby to infuse confidence in the people of the trouble-hit areas of Vijayawada.

Speaking to newsmen after a cabinet meeting in Hyderabad today, the chief minister, Mr N.T. Rama Rao, said the army personnel are yet to go to Vijayawada. Mr Rama Rao also said that he spoke to the home minister, Mr Buta Singh, on the telephone today and asked for more paramilitary forces. Mr Buta Singh promised to send immediately two companies of paramilitary forces.

The chief minister also said that 25 persons have been killed in police firing and incidents of violence in different parts of the state since yesterday. Two hundred and sixty nine buses were completely gutted, Mr Rama Rao added.

Our Vijayawada correspondent, R.R. Rao, who went round the town this morning, reports that some buildings are still burning. About 50 buses of the state road transport corporation and fire engines in the town are reported to have been burnt. Top police officials are now camping at Vijayawada to supervise the enforcement of law and order.

The human resource development minister, Mr P. Shiv Shanker, who arrived in Vijayawada this morning went to the residence of Mr Mohanaranga Rao and consoled the bereaved family. He appealed to the people to remain calm and help the authorities in maintaining law and order.

Meanwhile, a bundh [strike] is being observed in different parts of Andhra Pradesh today. Reports reaching Hyderabad indicate that the bundh called by the pradesh [state] Congress-I is peaceful and no untoward incident has been reported so far. In Hyderabad, the state transport buses are off the road and all business establishments, including restaurants and cinema halls, remained closed.

Except for a few autorickshaws and private vehicles, road communication is almost disrupted. The state government announced a public holiday for all educational institutions today. The South-Central Railway has either canceled or regulated a number of trains. According to the police, about 300 people were taken into custody in Hyderabad last night and early today as a preventive measure.

Curfews on 24 Towns; 30 Dead

BK2812032288 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0240 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] The situation in the coastal towns of Andhra Pradesh continued to be tense as stray incidents of violence were reported from several places. Twenty-four towns were brought under curfew and shoot-at-sight orders issued following the violence that erupted after the murder of the Congress-I MLA [Member of Legislative Assembly], Mr V. Mohanaranga Rao, in Vijaywada on Monday [26 December].

The death toll in mob violence and police firing has risen to 30. Over 200 people were injured. Police opened fire several times yesterday in Vijaywada, Gudivada, Tenali and other places to disperse violent mobs. The center is rushing three more companies of paramilitary forces to assist the state government in maintaining law and order.

In Vijaywada, the curfew has been relaxed from 0530 this morning to 1730 in the evening. This is to enable the public to pay their last respects to Mr Mohanaranga Rao and to attend the funeral. The curfew will be reimposed till tomorrow morning. A high-level Congress-I delegation is going to Vijaywada to attend the funeral.

In another development, an MLA of the ruling Telugu Desam party, Mr C.H. Venkataraman Jogayya, has resigned from the assembly, saying he was pained by the violent incidents in Vijaywada and other places during the last 2 days.

'Terrorist' Incidents Reported in Punjab

6 Bus Passengers Kidnapped

BK2512091088 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0830 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] In Punjab, terrorists kidnapped six passengers from a Punjab Roadways Bus near Makhoo in Ferozepore District this morning. According to an official spokesman, the terrorists stopped the bus near Makhoo and abducted the six passengers at gun point. The bus was on its way from Patti in Amritsar District to Chandigarh.

The terrorists, who were armed with AK-47 rifles, are believed to have taken the passengers in the Mund area.

The Punjab police chief, Mr K.P.S. Gill, along with security force personnel have rushed to the spot to supervise search operations.

Meanwhile, the security forces have arrested 14 more terrorists and their harborers in Gurdaspur District. Some arms and ammunition have been recovered from their possession.

6 Killed in Separate Incidents

BK2712054088 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0435 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] In Punjab, six persons have been killed in separate incidents since last night. An official spokesman said three members of a family were gunned down by terrorists at Rasalpura near Batala. One person each was killed in Hoshiarpur, Batala, and Amritsar.

4 'Terrorists' Killed

BK2812035488 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0240 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] In Punjab, four terrorists have been killed in three separate encounters with security forces since last night. An official spokesman said in Chandigarh that a terrorist, Avtar Singh, was killed in an encounter near Maku in the Mand area.

He is believed to be one of the four terrorists who kidnapped seven passengers from a Chandigarh-bound bus last week and later killed five of them. Two terrorists were killed in an encounter near village Cheema in Amritsar District and another terrorist was shot dead near village (Fote Pangar) in Dera Baba Nanak police station. The security forces arrested six terrorists from Gurdaspur District.

Report Claims Improved Internal Security in 1988
BK2512045688 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0435 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] The year-end review of the Home Ministry says that there has been considerable improvement in the internal security environment of the country during 1988. The review says this followed a number of steps taken including the flushing out of terrorists from the Golden Temple.

With regard to the Punjab situation, it says government's policy has been to curb terrorist activities and prevent infiltration and to restart the democratic process.

Making a broad assessment, the review says peace has been restored in Tripura and Darjeeling Hills. It also says a multi-pronged strategy has been evolved to tackle the problem of violence in different parts of the country.

Satellite Images To Be Purchased From Europe
BK2412091288 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0830 GMT 24 Dec 88

[Text] India has decided to buy more remote sensing images from the European Space Agency's first microwave satellite being launched in 1990. According to the chairman of the space commission, Professor U.R. Rao, India cannot afford to build its own microwave satellite at this stage because of the huge cost involved.

Buying of images from the European agency and receiving the data at Hyderabad would be cheaper.

He said India's own second remote sensing satellite—IRS 1B—is scheduled for launch in 1991 from the Soviet Union. India is also preparing for the second generation of remote sensing satellites—IRS 1C and IRS 1D—tentatively scheduled for 1993 and 1995.

Professor Rao also said that the country's next communication satellite—INSAT 1D—will be launched sometime in April or May next year.

Communication Satellite To Be Launched in Spring
BK2512160988 Delhi Domestic Service in English 1530 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] Work is in full swing for the launching of the Indian communication satellite—INSAT-1D—in April or May next year. It will be the last satellite in the INSAT-1 series and is being replaced by the indigenous INSAT-2 series.

Disclosing this to newsmen, the chairman of ISRO [India Space Research Organization], Professor U.R. Rao, said in New Delhi that the launching of INSAT-1D has become essential due to the fact the the life of INSAT 1B is to expire by September next year and the partial success of INSAT-1C .

U.S. Ambassador Presents Credentials 27 Dec
BK2712093288 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0830 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] The new U.S. ambassador to India, Dr John Randolph Hubbard, presented his credentials to the president, Mr Venkataraman, at Rashtrapathy Bhavan [President's House] this morning.

Welcoming the ambassador, Mr Venkataraman said India values friendly ties with the United States and is confident that the relationship will further strengthen.

Earlier, presenting the credentials, Dr John Randolph Hubbard said Washington is interested in further improving its friendship and cooperation with India.

Iran

U.S. 'Propaganda War' Against Libya Denounced
LD2512130688 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 1047 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Station commentary: "The U.S. Propaganda War Against Libya"]

[Text] In recent days U.S. Government officials have engaged in extensive propaganda to pave the way for resorting to probable military action against Libya. This has had extensive repurcussions in the world's political and news circles.

This propaganda was created by U.S. officials from sometime ago under the pretext of U.S. anxiety over Libya's production of chemical weapons. The propaganda reached a climax last Wednesday following a television interview by U.S. President Reagan.

In that interview Reagan said that he is still following up the probability of taking some military action with his allies against a vast factory producing chemical weapons in Libya. In that interview the U.S. President added: No decision has been made regarding this matter. We are still consulting our NATO allies, and we are closely watching the developments.

Following these remarks, a spokesman of the West German Foreign Ministry, while denying any knowledge of any talks between the United States and its European allies for launching an attack on Libya, said that there has been no discussion regarding this matter in NATO.

On the other hand, Libyan Government officials, reacting to the hostile U.S. propaganda against their country, have stongly denied the claim of Washington officials that there is a factory in Libya designed to produce chemical weapons. They have declared that this propaganda is pure lies.

In response to the U.S. President's accusations, Colonel al-Qadhdhafi, the Libyan leader, said: This factory which some claim is producing poison gases is in fact a pharmaceutical factory. The Libyan leader described the propaganda of U.S. officials as an aspect of international terrorism which is being guided by the United States. He also warned Washington that he will defend the territorial integrity of his country against any U.S. attack.

Side by side with their official reactions to U.S. accusations, the Libyan officials have mounted extensive diplomatic efforts to counter the threats of Washington's government and to inform world public opinion of the truth of the matter. In this connection, many countries and international organizations, while condemning the poisonous U.S. propaganda as a threat to world peace and security, have announced their solidarity with Libya.

To prove the hollowness of the U.S. accusations, Libyan officials have invited all reporters and ambassadors residing in Tripoli to take part in the commissioning of that pharmaceutical factory, which is situated 60 kms southwest of Tripoli. In the same connection, a Libyan official has expressed his country's readiness to allow international inspectors to visit that factory and prove that Libya is not producing chemical weapons.

In view of the extensive propaganda hue and cry which the United States has recently created against Libya, once again the memory of the U.S. bombing of Libyan cities in April 1986, been revived in the minds of world public opinion. At that time, following a number of incidents including an explosion in a U.S. military club in West Germany, the United States leveled accusations against Libya regarding its involvement in terrorist activities and bombed Tripoli and Benghazi, killing a number of civilians in that country.

It is interesting to note that the main persons who had been accused of involvement in that incident were recently set free in West Germany due to insufficient evidence.

The truth is that despite its humanitarian gestures and its claims of support for rights, the United States has itself been the inciter and source of a kind of terrorism which has come to be known as state terrorism. Reagan's record in the course of 8 years of his presidency proves this; its clearest example was the 1986 bombing of Libyan cities which was condemned by most countries and by world public opinion as a terrorist and aggressive act.

In connection with a wave of propaganda being waged by the United States against Libya regarding U.S. anxiety about the production of chemical weapons by Libya, this question is now asked by world public opinion:

If the U.S. Government is really so sensitive toward this issue, why did it not take any practical steps against the repeated use of those weapons by the Baghdad regime in the course of the Iraqi-imposed war against Iran? Why did the United States allow the Iraqi regime to use its arsenal of chemical weapons to perpetrate one of the vilest crimes in the history of wars; namely, the massacre of the wronged people of Halabjah?

Now world public opinion has clearly realized that the U.S. Government always acts in accordance with its own interests and has no interest in the principles of human rights. World public opinion feels the hollowness of U.S. propaganda against terrorism which has always been an excuse for Washington's aggressive policies.

The propaganda recently created by Reagan against Libya has the same basis. It is clear that if, by its propaganda efforts, the U.S. Government is trying to pave the way for action against Libya, such an action will be condemned in advance by world public opinion as a clear aggression.

New Soviet Moves in Afghanistan Viewed

NC2612082288 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 0330 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Central News Unit research group commentary: "New Political Developments on the Afghan Issue Following Simultaneous Soviet and Afghan Efforts"]

[Excerpts] As has been reported, a representative delegation of Afghan mujahidin arrived in the Islamic Republic of Iran from Peshawar, Pakistan on Sunday. Important political discussions then began between the Afghan mujahidin leaders in Tehran. According to informed sources, these meetings are aimed at formulating a strategy for the current round of talks with Moscow by the representative of the Afghan revolutionaries based in Iran and Pakistan. [passage omitted]

According to political observers, by criticising the Soviet Union for expressing its readiness to hold talks with the eight-member Iran-based mujahidin group, recent U.S. policy on the Afghanistan issue indicates that the Americans were not and are not in favor of the participation of the Iran-based Afghan mujahidin in the talks for resolving the Afghanistan issue.

In the same vein, ignoring the 2 million refugees living in Iran and the leaders of the eight-member coalition group who have mobilized all their resources for the liberation of the couantry is tantamount to dismissing a big segment of effective and combatant forces.

This is exactly what the Americans are so fervently seeking. They believe that igniting the flames of discord and initiating a war between Shi'ites and Sunnis, on any pretext, is the most effective way to gain influence and a foothold in the country of Afghanistan.

The meeting of Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Yuliy Vorontsov on Saturday with the former king of Afghanistan, Mohammad Zahir, indicates a change in

Moscow's tactics, not in its political strategy. Meanwhile, in view of the optimism of some Afghan mujahidin over the trend of peace talks with Soviet officials, Moscow is seeking to set up a coalition government with the participation of political groups, including some communist elements of the Kabul regime.

Political observers are of the opinion that, despite the differences between the seven-member Peshawar-based coalition and the eight-member Iran-based coalition, the participation of Zahir Shah in such a government would serve two purposes for Moscow.

First, by utilizing the weak position of Zahir Shah in the tribal setup of Afghanistan, it would benefit Marxist elements by (?placating) domestic public opinion. This would be of immense importance to Moscow in view of its complete departure from Afghanistan by 15 February, so that it can thus establish the future government of the country. [passage omitted]

Second, by legitimizing the national reconciliation program on the international level, on the basis of which the mujahidin groups are under pressure to continue talks, the program also makes it possible to set up a government in accordance with the Kremlin's wishes by attaining a consensus on the Afghanistan issue with the extensive participation of political groups, including communists.

In any case, the Afghan mujahidin, whether Shi'ite or Sunni, have resisted a superpower under the most dire conditions, and their heroism and selflessness over the past few years have brought them to the brink of a real victory. Thus, the converging of the mujahidin around one axis of solidarity and unity can bring political victory for the Muslim Afghan people following a military defeat for the strongest army of the world. The mujahidin will thus be a symbol of heroic resistance for a risen nation.

USSR's Vorontsov To Visit for Afghan Talks

LD2712092288 Tehran IRNA in English 0910 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—Soviet Ambassador to Kabul Yuliy Vorontsov is to visit the Iranian capital Tehran in the near future for talks with the Afghan Mujahidin coalition leaders, reported the English language TEHRAN TIMES Tuesday.

The paper quoted head of Afghanistan's Islamic movement's executive and central council Seyyed Mohammad 'Ali Javid who is currently here.

He told TEHRAN TIMES on Monday "The Afghan mujahidin are more willing to negotiate with the Soviet Union than with its puppet regime in Kabul."

Seyyed Javid did not ruled out the possibility of a coalition government with Muslims now cooperating with the Kabul regime.

He, however, stressed that the future government in Afghanistan will be Islamic and will allow marxists to be active granted that they do not plot against the country.

Leaders of Pakistan and Iran-based Afghan mujahidin are currently in Tehran for talks on future of Afghanistan.

Rabbani: Afghan Mujahidin Groups To Meet 15 Feb

LD2712192988 Tehran IRNA in English 1837 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—Afghan resistance leader Burhanuddin Rabbani denied suggestions of a major rift between mujahidin groups based in Pakistan and Iran and said the two factions would get together soon for a strategy meeting.

Rabbani said in a joint press conference with the spokesman for the Iran-based mujahidin Muhammad Karim Khalili here Tuesday that his trip to Iran did not highlight differences of views.

"There isn't any kind of difference or conflict between us," he emphasized.

Talks with the officials of the Islamic Republic and the leaders of the eight-party mujahidin coalition were held because of the latest important developments concerning the Afghan issue.

"The mujahidin are on the verge of final victory and the formation of a government." he said.

Khalili said the mujahidin groups in Iran and Pakistan would meet on 15 February in Peshawar (Pakistan) "to decide on the future government in Afghanistan."

A Tehran daily reported Tuesday that the Soviet ambassador to Kabul would soon arrive in Tehran for talks with the mujahidin. The mujahidin coalition in Iran two weeks ago said the talks had been offered but Khalili repeated today that a final decision whether to accept or reject the offer had not been made.

Soviet officials have met separately with the resistance alliance headed by Rabbani in Saudi Arabia and with former King Zahir Shah.

"Zahir Shah belongs to history and he has no role in Afghanistan and its political future," Rabbani told the press conference.

He said the mujahidin would agree to cooperate with three groups of officials currently in Afghanistan: those who have been forced to accept posts in the government, those who are cooperating with the mujahidin and those "with no blood on their hands".

Foreign Ministry Statement on Afghan Anniversary
LD2612180188 Tehran Domestic Service in Persian 1630 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Simultaneous with the anniversary of the military invasion of Afghanistan, our country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement noting the occupation of the Muslim and neighboring country of Afghanistan by the foreign forces.

The occupation has led to the killing of more than one million innocent Afghans, caused the destruction of Afghanistan, and has left more than five million people homeless.

The statement praises the continuous jihad of the Muslim nation of Afghanistan which draws its inspiration from the supreme teachings of Islam. The statement notes:

As the 10th anniversary of the occupation of Afghanistan approaches, an anniversary marked by the Soviet Union's forced withdrawal from Afghanistan and the recognition of the mujahidin as the true representatives of the Muslim nation of Afghanistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran expresses the hope that this situation may lead to the unconditional transfer of power to the true representatives of the Muslim nation of Afghanistan, and thereby pave the way for the return of refugees and the re-establishment of peace in that country.

Resident Afghans Mark Occupation Anniversary
LD2712113088 Tehran IRNA in English 1120 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—Afghan mujahidin and refugees residing here held a massive march today marking the ninth anniversary of their country's occupation by Soviet forces.

Condemning continuation of their homeland's occupation, the demonstrators called for formation of an Islamic government in Afghanistan. They also denounced formation of a coalition government as proposed by the Marxist government in Afghanistan as well as any reconciliation with the Soviet Union.

Lashing out at U.S. interventions throughout the world, the marchers also voiced support for anti-imperialist liberation-seeking movements.

The Afghan mujahidin declared support for the campaign of the Lebanese and Palestinian nations and denounced Zionist regime's crimes in the occupied territories. They also called for the liberation of Palestine from under the claws of the Zionist usurpers.

The demonstrators carried pictures of leaders and martyrs of Afghanistan revolution and placards calling for the continuation of the Muslim people of Afghanistan's struggles.

Spokesman for the Tehran-based 8-party coalition of Afghanistan, Mohammad Karim Khalili denounced new Soviet conspiracies to maintain their influence through a coalition government and said any negotiations to this end would be senseless.

The Afghan nation has proved the righteousness of its Islamic revolution and has thus thwarted Western and Eastern plots in the country, he pointed out.

Stressing vigilance of the Afghan nation in political scenes, Khalili said the real representatives of the Afghan nation were those holding the initiative at the battle scenes.

The spokesman also condemned attempts by the enemies to sow discord among Afghan mujahidin and warned the Afghan combatants against these plots.

At the end of the march, a 14-point resolution was issued calling for the establishment of an Islamic government in Afghanistan.

The resolution also considered the present Kabul regime illegal and treacherous and rebuked its plans.

The idea of a coalition government comprising Islamic forces and the Communist Party of Afghanistan was also condemned and labelled as an imperialistic plot.

The resolution also rejected a recent proposal by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev at U.N. General Assembly regarding the settlement of U.N. peace-keeping forces and establishment of cease-fire. It disapproved of any cease- fire before complete withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

A group of female Afghans also participated in the demonstrations chanting slogans and carrying placards. One of the placards read: "Reconciliation with those whose hands are stained with the blood of Afghan youths is treason against one-million Afghan martyrs."

Similar rallies were held in a number of other Iranian cities, including Isfahan, Qom, Arak and Zahedan.

Khomeyni Receives Lebanon's Shams al-Din
NC2712181588 (Clandestine) Radio Free Lebanon in Arabic 1645 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] The conflict between Amal and Hizballah was the subject discussed at a meeting held in Tehran today between Imam Khomeyni and Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din, deputy chairman of the Higher Islamic Shi'ite Council. Ja'far Mu'awiyah, Lebanese ambassador to Iran, was present for part of this meeting.

Shaykh Shams al-Din left the Iranian capital this afternoon and arrived in the Syrian capital this evening. He described his talks with Iranian officials as useful.

Talks With Khamene'i

LD2512174288 Tehran Television Service in Persian 1600 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din, deputy speaker of the Lebanese Shi'ite High Council, met President Khamene'i this evening. Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din first briefed Mr Khamene'i about the latest developments in Lebanon and the Muslim situation.

The president then referred to the important role of Lebanese ulema in strengthening the Muslim front, and he stressed the importance of unity among Lebanese Muslims and the progressive forces.

Syrian Foreign Minister Arrives for Consultations

Welcomed by Velayati

LD2712134288 Tehran IRNA in English 1330 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' arrived here Tuesday with a message from President Hafiz al-Asad for his Iranian counterpart Hojjat ol-Eslam 'Ali Khamene'i.

Al-Shar' was greeted at Tehran's Mehrabad airport by Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati. Upon arrival, the Syrian foreign minister told reporters that he was here to exchange views with Iranian officials on the latest developments in the region and on other issues of mutual concern.

Referring to the desire of the Persian Gulf littoral states to expand ties with Iran, Al-Shar' reiterated Syria's role in bringing the stands of the Persian Gulf Arab States closer to those of the Islamic Republic.

He said Syria believes that expansion of relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Persian Gulf littoral states was the best way to strengthen regional security and stability.

Al-Shar' maintained that support for Palestinian uprising in the occupied lands was the basis of unity among Muslims and Arab and Islamic countries in the region.

In response, Velayati referred to the ever-increasing ties between the two countries and lauded the Damascus government for siding with Iran during the nearly 8-year-old Iraqi-imposed war.

Makes Statement

JN2712194688 Damascus Television Service in Arabic 1830 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] President Hafiz al-Asad has sent a message to Iranian President 'Ali Khamene'i. The message was carried by Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar', who arrived in Tehran at noon today. He was received at the airport by Iranian Foreign Minister Dr 'Ali Akbar Velayati, senior Iranian Foreign Ministry officials, the Syrian charge d'affaires in Tehran, and embassy staff.

The minister expressed his happiness over being in Iran, and conveyed the greetings of President Hafiz al-Asad, the Syrian leadership, and the Syrian Arab people to the leadership and people in Iran.

Asked by reporters about Syria's position on the Arab countries' policy, particularly that of the Arabian Gulf countries, toward establishing good relations with Iran, the minister said that Syria has been exerting efforts to establish the best relations of cooperation between Iran and the Arab countries in the Gulf region.

He pointed out that this Syrian position was firm during the war, and that it is natural for Syria to continue this position after the war because we in Syria believe that the Gulf region's security and stability are very important for the progress of this region's peoples and for strengthening our joint positions in the face of our nation's enemies.

He also stressed that Syria has never missed any opportunity to emphasize the importance of real solidarity to confront the Zionist occupier and all the challenges facing our Arab and Islamic nations.

On his part, Iranian Foreign Minister Dr 'Ali Akbar Velayati described Syrian-Iranian relations as good and firm, adding that they will witness great development in the future. He said that the viewpoints of the two countries were identical on all issues pertaining to the region, especially the Palestine question.

He also pointed to the current cooperation between Syria and Iran and its importance in foiling the enemies' plots against the two countries. He also described the Tehran visit of Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' as a positive and important step, especially since it comes under delicate circumstances in the region.

Exchanges Views With Velayati

LD2712175788 Tehran IRNA in English 1734 GMT 27 Dec 88

[All quotation marks as received]

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—Visiting Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' Tuesday told his Iranian opposite number that Tehran-Damascus relations were "excelent" both before and after the August-20 Iran-Iraq armistice.

"Iran-Syria relations will be further consolidated in the future," Al-Shar' predicted.

'Ali Akbar Vjelayati in reply said the Islamic republic and Persian Gulf states "were moving toeards promotion of relations. "We want to have cordial ties with them," he emphasised.

Velayati also laid weight on further consolidation of mutual ties.

The Islamic Republic condemns compromising efforts, Velayati said referring to recent developments concerning occupied Palestine. He told his counterpart that Iran seriously supports the struggles of Palestinian Muslims.

Further on Meeting

JN2712213688 Damascus Domestic Service in Arabic 2115 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran—Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' this evening met with Iranian Foreign Minister Dr 'Ali Akbar Velayati. The meeting was attended by Ahmad Zin, Syrian charge d'affairs in Tehran; and Hasan Akhtari, Iranian ambassador in Damascus. The meeting dealt with current developments in the region and bilateral relations and means to bolster them in all fields.

Ties Discussed With Khamene'i

LD2812102788 Tehran IRNA in English 1013 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 28, IRNA—The visiting Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' met with President 'Ali Khamene'i here Wednesday morning and conveyed greetings of Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad.

During the meeting also attended by Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati the Syrian minister who arrived here Tuesday reported on the latest developments in the region and called for further expansion of Tehran-Damascus relations.

President Khamene'i thanking his Syrian counterpart said that Iran welcomed promotion of its relations with Syria and said that the Islamic Republic of Iran considered the Syrian Government and president as a major ally. He stressed that Iran is determined to expand its relations with Syria.

Referring to the common stances of the two countries vis-a-vis the imperialist threats both in the region and the world, the president said that Syria was the only Arab state engaged in direct struggle against the Zionist regime and praised Syria for it anti-Zionist campaign.

The president added that both Iran and Syria enjoyed a unique position in world political affairs and, therefore, their relations should be further consolidated.

Cooperation, Trade Relations Discussed With Oman

Musavi on 'Friendly Ties'

LD2712124588 Tehran IRNA in English 1210 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—Expansion of friendly ties between the Islamic Republic and the Persian Gulf littoral states is in the interest of all regional countries, Prime Minister Hoseyn Musavi said on Tuesday.

The premier told Omani Minister of Commerce and Industry Salim ibn 'Abdallah al-Ghazali that in view of common cultural ties between Iran and Oman, it was necessary to expand bilateral ties in political, economic and cultural fields.

Al-Ghazali briefed Premier Musavi on the outcome of the recently-concluded summit of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council in Bahrain.

Trade Relations To Expand

LD2712162588 Tehran IRNA in English 1538 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—The Islamic Republic will spare no effort to promote trade ties and exchange of goods with Oman, announced Acting Commerce Minister Abd al- Hoseyn Vahaji.

In a meeting with visiting Omani Minister of Commerce and Industry Salim ibn 'Abdallah al-Ghazali today, Vahaji expressed hope Tehran and Muscat would endeavour for betterment of mutual relations.

Also discussed at the meeting was expansion of cooperation in various fields.

The Omani minister arrived here yesterday at the head of a delegation.

Training Agreement Reached

LD2712172288 Tehran IRNA in English 1653 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—Visiting Omani Minister of commerce and Industry Salim ibn al-Ghazali told President 'Ali Khamene'i today that his country is ready to expand cooperation with Iran.

The president in response emphasised that regional Muslaim states should strive to promote mutual cooperation in various fields.

In related news, Al-Ghazali who arrived here yesterday, conferred with Minister of Industries Gholamreza Shafe'i on industrial cooperation, including import of Iranian goods and training of Omani personnel in Iran.

In a separate meeting, the Omani minister also informed head of Mostaz'afan (oppressed) foundation Tahmasb Mazaheri of Muscat's readiness to broaden relations with Iran in various areas.

Mazaheri replied that Iran is prepared for training Omani personnel and specialists from other Muslim countries.

Visit 'Successful'

LD2812052388 Tehran IRNA in English 0510 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec 28 IRNA—The visiting Omani minister of Commerce and Industry Salim ibn 'Abdallah al-Ghazali in a meeting with Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati here Tuesday afternoon called for expansion of bilateral trade and economic relations.

Al-Ghazali who arrived here Monday described his visit as successful and added that signing of the letter of understanding and formation of joint Tehran-Muscat economic commission are practical steps in promotion of mutual relations.

Velayati hailed positive stances of Oman in the recent Bahrain summit of the heads of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council. Velayati stressed that the Persian Gulf belonged to the people of the region and outsiders should not be allowed to interfere.

Velayati described the letter of understanding and formation of the joint economic commission as a turning point in bilateral relations.

Letter of Understanding Signed

LD2812091588 Tehran IRNA in English 0900 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 28, IRNA—A letter of understanding was signed between Iran and Oman today at the end of the visit of an Omani trade team to Iran. The two countries also agreed to form a joint economic-industrial commission.

The letter of understanding was signed by Iran's Minister of Heavy Industries Behzad Nabavi and Omani Minister of Commerce and Industry Salim ibn 'Abdallah al-Ghazali.

The joint commission is to be held early in March annually in Tehran and Muscat alternatively. The first session is to be held in March next year in Muscat.

Upon departure, the Omani minister who arrived here Monday expressed satisfaction with the result of his 2-day visit.

He lauded the formation of the joint economic commission through which he said the two sides could review commercial issues as well as economic and industrial cooperation.

An Omani expert delegation is to visit Tehran within weeks to get acquainted with Iran's industrial possibilities and an Iranian economic team will return the visit in the first quarter of 1989.

Simultaneously with the visit of Iranian delegation to Oman, an exclusive exhibition will be held in Muscat displaying Iran's export products.

According to the letter of understanding, Iran and Oman have decided to further strengthen mutual ties through expansion of economic relations.

The Omani delegation during its stay here met with President 'Ali Khamene'i, Prime Minister Hoseyn Musavi, Minister of Heavy Industries Behzad Nabavi, Minister of Industries Gholamreza Shafe'i, Acting Commerce Minister Abdolhoseyn Vahhani and Deputy Prime Minister and head of the Mustazafan Foundation Tahmas Mazaheri.

Reportage on Visit by DPRK Foreign Minister

Delegation Arrives 26 Dec

LD2612151688 Tehran IRNA in English 1507 GMT 26 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 26, IRNA—Foreign Minister Kim Yong-nam and Minister of Foreign Trade Chong Songnam of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) arrived here today, heading top level delegations.

The DPRK delegations were greeted at Mehrabad International Airport by Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati and Minister of Construction Jihad Gholam Reza Forouzesh.

Upon arrival, Foreign Minister Kim told reporters that he was looking forward to exchange views with Iranian officials on issues of mutual interest and expansion of bilateral ties "particularly during the post-war reconstruction period."

Velayati responded "Tehran attaches great importance to ties with Pyongyang," and said among other topics the two countries' officials are to discuss the trend of the Iran-Iraq peace talks, developments in the region and East Asia, as well as other international issues.

On the peace negotiations, he said withdrawal of Iraqi forces to international borders is still a priority for both Iran and the U.N. chief despite Iraq's efforts to disrupt the issue.

"The Islamic Republic regards no other issues more important than the troop withdrawal," Velayati stressed.

For his part, the North Korean trade minister pointed to the two countries' vast potential in urban development, dam construction, fisheries, maritime resources and shipyards, and said there are ample opportunities for economic, trade and technical cooperation.

Received by Rafsanjani

LD2712111388 Tehran IRNA in English 1100 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—Visiting foreign minister of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Yong-nam briefed Majlis Speaker Hojjat ol-Eslam Hashemi-Rafsanjani on the latest developments in the Korean Peninsula and the proposed plans for the unity of the two Koreas.

Referring to the friendly relations between Tehran and Pyongyang, Kim called for further cooperation between the two countries and Iran's assistance to North Korea for oil explorations.

Elsewhere Kim expressed his country's support for the full implementation of the U.N. Resolution 598 and the U.N. chief's four-point plan, and halted the Islamic Republic for its sincere cooperation with Javier Perez de Cuellar.

Kim accompanied by Economic Affairs Minister Chung Son-nam also conveyed warm greetings of the North Korean leader Kim Il-song to Hoj. Rafsanjani.

Speaker Rafsanjani announced Iran's readiness for consolidation of Tehran-Pyongyang political and economic ties and said Iran prefers to work with the countries which had good cooperation with Iran during the imposed war. "Our country needs a wide-scale reconstruction," he added.

He also expressed Iran's readiness to cooperate with North Korea in oil and technical fields.

The North Korean ministers heading a high-powered delegation arrived here Monday afternoon.

Economic Cooperation Discussed

LD2712173588 Tehran IRNA in English 1658 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—Plan and Budget Minister Ma'sud Roghani Zanjani today discussed expansion of economic cooperation with minister of external economic affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Chong Song-nam.

Roghani Zanjani, briefing chong on Iran's rehabilitation policy, noted that the Islamic Republic could make use of North Korean experiences in this regard.

He said the Plans and Budget Ministry would soon despatch a delegation to Pyongyang to explore ways of joint cooperation in Iran's post war reconstruction projects.

Chong repeated North Korea's desire for exchange of relevent data and expert delegations and transfer of technology to Iran. He also invited Roghani Zanjani to pay a visit to Pyongyang.

Meanwhile, chong held the second round of talks with Construction Jihad Minsiter Gholam Reza Forouzesh today. The talks focused on mutual cooperation in fisheries and joint research activities for exploitation of maritime resources on the high seas.

Later in the day, Chong called on Housing Minister Serajeddin Kazeruni to discuss mutual cooperation.

Chong, along with North Korean Foreign Minister Kim Yong-nam arrived here yesterday heading a high-powered eco-political delegation.

Mining Minister Returns from Visit to DPRK

LD2712055588 Tehran IRNA in English 0550 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehra, Dec 27 IRNA—Iran's Minister of Mines and Metals Mohammad Reza Ayatollahi returned from Pyongyang Tuesday morning [27 December] at the end of a one-week visit after talks with high-ranking officials of the Democratic Republic of Korea and signing a letter of understanding.

In Pyongyang Ayatollahi held talks with President Kim Il-song of North Korea and handed over a message from President 'Ali Khamene'i of Iran.

In a brief interview upon arrival he described his talks with North Korean officials as good adding that the Iranian delegation was warmly received.

He added that the Pyongyang officials showed a positive attitude toward Iran's stance in all issues raised in talks.

On the letter of understanding signed Ayatollahi said that agreements were reached on cooperation in the fields of mines and metals including export of of 30,000 tons of concentrated lead and zinc to North Korea to be returned to Iran after being turned into bars. It also calls for purchase of 200,000 tons of steel products from North Korea.

Major Operations Made Against Drug Trafficking

LD2712171488 Tehran IRNA in English 1646 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA—The Islamic Revolution's Committees [IRC] have arrested nearly a thousand persons in connection with drug offenses in recent days apparently in a pre-emptive strike to put pressure on the narcotics trade before the implementation of a tough new law.

In addition a strip on the southern border area with Afghanistan has been declared out of bounds for unauthorized persons to stop drug caravans from penetrating into Iran, a senior committee official said.

Most arrests were made in Khorasan Province bordering Afghanistan where 543 were detained for various drug offenses along with a total of 120 kgs of narcotics and 12 fire-arms.

Another 346 persons were arrested in Baluchestan va Sistan, Tehran and central provinces. They were caught with a total of 271 kgs of narcotics.

During the past two days the IRC also killed or wounded 27 traffickers who had fled towards heights near Nasak about 75 kms southeast of Kerman.

The increasing number of arrests and discoveries follows last week's major attack on a narcotics caravan in Kerman Province during which a large number of traffickers were killed and 200 kgs of drugs confiscated.

"These show that the capability of the disciplinary forces is increasing by the day in the region and bandits and traffickers are besieged and under pressure," said Mahmoud Mir-Lohi, deputy intelligence and operational commander of the IRC.

He told IRNA that as of 21 January the committees, as the operational arm of the anti-drug campaign headquarters, will "mobilize all their capabilities" to carry out necessary operations.

From that date a new law will go into effect giving wide powers to the anti-drug squads with severe punishments for anyone involved directly or indirectly with narcotics.

Anyone in possession of a minimum 30 grams of heroin or five kgs of opium will face the death penalty, so will armed drug dealers and those who have repeatedly addicted others.

Mir-Lohi also revealed that a 200-kms border zone on Iran's southern-most border point with Afghanistan up to the town of Zahak has been declared a no-go area and warned people not to enter the area.

"No one should get near this area," he said. "We believe that drug caravans are using this area and forces stationed there have been ordered to deal firmly with any unauthorized person."

In the past two months 21 attempts by traffickers to penetrate into Iran from that area have been foiled by the IRC, he added.

Mir-Lohi also said 50 IRC posts have been established in eastern border areas and a number of patrols have started surveillance operations.

"Deep inside the Yazd Desert and especially in the central desert in Kerman IRC forces have been stationed and every moment their readines has increased," he said.

Iraqi Cease-Fire Violations Detailed

LD2512144788 Tehran IRNA in English 1400 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] Tehran, Dec. 25, IRNA—Iraqi forces violated the ceasefire 95 times in a 2-week period between 26 November and 11 December, according to Iranian military observers.

In a report, the observers said the Iraqi violations ranged from heavy artillery fire to troop movements and fortifications as well as movement of warships near the Persian Gulf but only one led to casualties.

The ceasefire came into effect on 20 August based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 598.

Three rounds of U.N.-sponsored talks have failed to achieve substantial progress on implementing the resolution in full because of Iraqi demands outside the framework of the resolution.

One previously disclosed clash in Kushk southwest of Ahvaz on 11 December left two Iranian soldiers martyred and four others injured but the report did not mention casualties in other incidents.

On 29 and 30 November Iraqi frigates were spotted moving up and down Khawr 'Abdallah at the headwaters of the Persian Gulf and there were similar movements by the Iraqi Navy on 4 and 5 December.

In addition enemy helicopters made several flights over the Sar Dasht border area in West Azerbayjan Province on 4 and 5 December and were also spotted in the Nim Eistgah [placename as received] area north of Khorramshah in Khuzestan Province.

Many of the violations were recorded with the knowledge of U.N. observer forces, the report noted.

Border Crossing With Turkey Reopened

LD2512191588 Tehran IRNA in English 1835 GMT 25 Dec 88

[Text] Orumiyeh, W. Azarbayjan Prov., Dec. 25, IRNA—The border checkpoint of Seru, 50 kms. west of here on the borders with Turkey will be reopened to travelers as of Monday to reduce traffic jams at Bazargan further north.

West Azarbayjan Governor-General Yusef Ata'i also announced that passenger trains would start operating again between Iran and Turkey starting next week.

The railway track passes the Iranian border town of Razi and located between the towns of Salmas and Khvoy.

The railroad already plays a prominent part in Iran-Turkey trade exchanges, and in view of Ankara's readiness passenger trains will soon start operating, he added.

Seru—closed due to the Iraqi war—is opposite the town Bajiran in Turkey.

"The customs office at Seru would further facilitate commerce of regional merchants, and also visitors to and from Syria would have less distance to travel then before," Ata'i said.

Seru road will be widened in the next two years and once connected to the causeway presently under-construction over Lake Orumiyeh, it will be the closest border exit point higher up on the western borders with Turkey," he noted.

Pakistan

Saudi Diplomat Wounded in Karachi Shooting

BK2812023888 Islamabad Domestic Service in Urdu 0200 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Prime Minister Ms Benazir Bhutto has expressed her heartfelt condolences to the Saudi ambassador on the shooting incident in Karachi in which the Saudi counselor was wounded. She directed the authorities in the Department of Health to provide the best facilities for the treatment of the Saudi counselor.

She also directed the provincial government and investigation agencies to arrest the criminals without any delay and asked to be kept informed of the investigations and of the Saudi diplomat's health.

Sind Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah went to the hospital to visit the wounded Saudi diplomat.

Yaqub Khan on Successes of SAARC Activities

BK2712073088 Islamabad Domestic Service in Urdu 0200 GMT 27 Dec 88

[Text] Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan has said that the determined political will of SAARC member countries to cooperate with each other is one of the most significant achievements of this association.

In an interview with Radio Pakistan's representative in Islamabad, he compared SAARC with other similar regional associations and said that in the 3 years of its existence SAARC had moved forward considerably toward achieving its objectives. The SAARC leaders have shown determination to meet common regional problems through cooperation and collaboration.

Replying to a question, he said the association has witnessed consolidation and rationalization of its program and streamlining of its activities through an integrated program of action in different agreed areas.

About the future program of SAARC, the foreign minister said Pakistan has already submitted a proposal for launching SAARC 2000 and hoped the concept would be adopted during the summit.

The plan lays emphasis on the use of human resources in development planning, and calls for paying attention to public welfare and fulfilling the basic human requirements of health, education and housing.

Radio Pakistan's diplomatic correspondent understands that under SAARC 2000 the member nations will prepare national plans fixing targets for fulfilling the basic human requirements by the year 2000. These plans can be implemented within the framework of the SAARC regional cooperation program.

Wasim Sajjad Elected New Senate Chairman

BK2412153488 Islamabad Domestic Service in Urdu 1500 GMT 24 Dec 88

[Excerpt] Wasim Sajjad of the Islamic Democratic Alliance has been elected the new chairman of the Senate. The polling for the post was held today. Wasim Sajjad secured 53 votes, while his sole opponent Mohammad Tariq Chaudhary—an independent candidate—got 25 votes of the total 81 votes polled. Three votes were rejected.

Later, Wasim Sajjad took the oath of office. The acting chairman, Syed Mohammad Fazal Agha, administered the oath. After taking the oath of office, the new chairman assured the senators that although he is a member of a political party, he will maintain balance and impartiality during Senate proceedings. [passage omitted]

Two More Ministers Inducted Into Federal Cabinet

BK2812111888 Islamabad Domestic Service in English 1100 GMT 28 Dec 88

[Text] Two more federal ministers were sworn in at a ceremony in Aiwan-e-Sadar [Presidency] in Islamabad today. They are Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Laghari and Sayeed Iftikhar Hussain Gilani.

The president, Mr Ghulam Ishaq Khan, administered the oath of office.

The portfolios are: Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Laghari—Water and Power; Sayeed Iftikhar Hussain Gilani—Law and Justice.

Sri Lanka

Opposition Readies for First Election in 11 Years

BK2712093888 Hong Kong AFP in English 0848 GMT 27 Dec 88

[By Amal Jayasinghe]

[Text] Colombo, Dec 27 (AFP)—Opposition parties are scrambling to form alliances to contest a forthcoming parliamentary election, the first in 11 years, after a divided opposition lost in a presidential vote to the ruling party candidate.

The moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) said it was seeking an electoral pact with minority Tamil and Muslim parties and former guerrilla groups to contest the February 15 general election.

"Our people want us to have a representation in Parliament. We want to have a broadbase unity among Tamil groups before the election," TULF General Secretary Appapillai Amirthalingam said.

A militant group turned political party, the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), said it would contest the polls in the Tamil-populated north and east even if others did not join them.

Three other former guerrilla groups were also talking to each other in an effort to hammer out a common pact before January 6, the final day for filing nominations, political sources said.

The main opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), whose candidate lost narrowly to Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa of the ruling United National Party (UNP) in presidential elections last week, said it would fight the general election on a joint platform with four other parties.

A UNP spokesman said it was probably the only national party to go it alone at the general election. The UNP has already called for applications from prospective MP's, the spokesman said.

Local press reports said the forthcoming election was likely to be contested by more alliances of several parties than any previous ballot since independence from Britain in 1948.

The marxist Nava Sama Samaja (new Equal Society) Party (NSSP), which backed leftwing candidate Ossie Abeygoonesekera who came third in the presidential vote, said they hoped to achieve a fair representation in the general election.

"The general election is going to be quite different. Smaller groups which backed the UNP (at the presidential election) will want to send their own representatives to Parliament," NSSP leader Vasudeva Nanayakkara said.

He said his party was contesting the polls with three other leftwing parties as the United Socialist Alliance (USA) and was confident of winning a considerable amount of seats in Parliament.

Outgoing President Junius Jayewardene dissolved Parliament and announced general elections six months ahead of schedule, hours before the presidential election results were known on December 20.

The UNP came to power after the 1977 general election and remained in power by extending the term of Parliament through a 1982 referendum instead of staging parliamentry elections.

It was not immediately clear if the dominant Tamil separatist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sinhalese militant Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP, or People's Liberation Front) would contest the general election.

Unlike the LTTE, the JVP is a recognised political party although it operates as an underground organisation waging a violent anti-government campaign and was banned between 1983 and May this year.

President-elect Ranasinghe Premadasa, 65, in an apparent reference to militants said they had "one more chance" to enter the democratic process by contesting the general election.

Officials said there was no response either from the JVP or the LTTE , but violence had subsided since the presidential poll.

"There is the odd killing here and there. But it is not with the same intensity of 10 to 15 a day we had before (the election)," a military official said.

Pressure on LTTE To Shun Violence Continues

BK2412033188 Delhi Domestic Service in English 0240 GMT 24 Dec 88

[Text] In Sri Lanka, the EPRLF chief, Mr Padmanabaha, has said that efforts are continuing to persuade the LTTE to give up violence and join the democratic process.

In an interview to AIR correspondent, T. Jayaraj, in Jaffna last night, he said the LTTE has not responded to the offer yet, but they have not opposed it also.

This, he said, can be considered as an indication to expect a positive response soon from the LTTE.